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THE

Christian in Complete Armour:

OR, A

TREATISE

OF THE

SAINTS' WAR AGAINST THE DEVIL.

WHEREIN

A DISCOVERY IS MADE OF THAT GRAND ENEMY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE, IN HIS POLICIES, POWER, SEAT OF HIS EMPIRE, WICKEDNESS, AND CHIEF DESIGN HE HATH AGAINST THE SAINTS.

A MAGAZINE OPENED,

From whence the Christian is furnished with Spiritual Arms for the Battle, helped on with his Armour, and taught the Use of his Weapons; together with the happy Issue of the whole War.

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AND FOR ME, THAT UTTERANCE MAY BE GIVEN UNTO ME, THAT I MAY OPEN MY MOUTH BOLDLY, TO MAKE KNOWN THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL. FOR WHICH I AM AN AMBASSADOR IN BONDS.

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THE

CHRISTIAN IN COMPLETE ARMOUR,

&c.

CHAP. X.

The Comforting Property of the Word to bleeding Consciences.

THIRDLY, Its power to comfort and raise a dejected spirit. Conscience is God's prison in the creature's own bosom, from whence none can have his release, except by his warrant that made the mittimus, and committed him thither. Indeed he is a weak prince, that hath no prison to commit offenders unto, but what another can break open. This where God lays sinners in chains, is not such. *A wounded spirit*, saith Solomon, *who can bear?* Yea, and who can cure? If any creature could, surely then the devils were as able as any to do it: but we see they have not to this day found the way to shake off those fetters which God keepeth them in; but lie roaring under the unspeakable torment of God's wrath; and they who cannot cure their own wounds, are like to be but poor physicians to help others; indeed they acknowledge it beyond their skill and power: *Wherefore dost thou ask of me*, said the devil to Saul, *seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thy enemy?* 1 Sam. xxviii. 16.

The distress of an afflicted conscience ariseth from the dismal sense of divine wrath for sin: now none can remove this, but he that can infallibly assure the soul of God's pardoning mercy; and this lies so deep in God's heart, that God alone, who only knoweth his own thoughts, can be the messenger to bring the news; and therefore the word which doth this, can come from none but him; and that it is able not only to do this, but also to fill the soul with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, is a truth so undoubted, that we need not ascend up to heaven for further confirmation; that spirit which first indited the word, hath sealed it to the hearts of innumerable believers.

Indeed all the saints acknowledge their comfort and peace to be drawn out of these wells of salvation. *In the midst of my perplexed thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul*, Psal. cxix. Nay, he doth not only tell us his own experience, whence he had his joy, but others also to have had theirs from the same tap, Psalm cvii. 17. *Fools, because of transgression, are afflicted.* And what then can ease them? Will all the rarities that can be got by sea or land, make a diversion to their thoughts, and ease them of their pain? No, for *their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death,* ver. 18. What cordial then have they left to use, or way to take for their relief? Truly none, but to betake themselves to prayers and tears; *Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble; he saveth them out of their distresses*, ver. 19. And with what key doth God open their prison door? it follows, ver. 20. *He sent his word, and healed them.* If you shall say all this is meant of outward trouble, yet surely you must grant it holds more strong concerning that which is inward. What, but a word from God's mouth, can heal a distressed spirit, when the body pineth and languisheth, till God speaketh a healing word unto it?

Great and mighty things are spoken of thee, and done by thee, O Holy Word! Thou outviest the world's joy, and makest the soul that hath but tasted thy strong consolations, presently to disrelish all sensual delights, as flashy and frothy; so pure and powerful is the light of that joy which thou kindlest in the saint's bosom, that it quencheth all sinful carnal joy with its beams, as the sun doth the fire on the hearth. Thou conquerest the horror of death, that it is not feared. Thou vanquishest the pains thereof, that they are not felt. Thou treadest on scorpions and serpents, and they have no power to sting or hurt those that believe in thee: devils know thee, and flee before thee, quitting, at sight of thee, their holds, and leave those consciences which they had so long under their power and tyranny, for thee to enter with thy sweet consolations. Thou quenchest the flames of hell itself, and makest the soul, that even now was thrown bound by despair, into the fiery furnace of God's wrath, to walk comfortably and unsinged amidst the thoughts thereof. Thou bringest heaven down to earth, and givest the believing soul a prospect of that heavenly Jerusalem which is so far off, as if he were walking in the blessed streets thereof; yea, thou entertainest him with the same delicacies, which glorified saints, though more fully, feed on, so that sometimes he forgetteth he is in the body, even when pains and torments are upon him.

This have the saints experimented, and more than my pen or their own tongue can express; so that we may say to him, that yet questions whence the scriptures came, as the blind man cured

by

by Christ did to the Pharisees, John ix. 30. *This is a marvellous thing*, saith he, *that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes;* so here, This is marvellous, yea ridiculous, to say we know not whence the scripture is, when it can do all this; since the world began was it not heard, that the word of a mere creature could remove mountains of despair, and fill the souls of poor sinners with such joy and peace, in spite of hell, and the creature's own unbelief, under the weight of which, as a heavy grave-stone, he lay buried and sealed.

CHAP. XI.

The converting Power of the Word.

FOURTHLY, The work of conversion, which none but God, who is the God of all grace, can produce.

When John's disciples came to Christ to be resolved who he was, whether the Messias or not, Matt. xi. 14. Christ neither tells them he was, or was not he, but sends them to take their answer from the marvellous works he did: *Go*, saith he, *and shew John again those things which you do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them;* or (as in the Greek) are *gospellized:* That is, they are transformed into the very nature of the gospel, and acted by the spirit which breathes in the gospel. By all which instances Christ's drift was, to give an ocular demonstration of their faith, that he, who did such miracles, could be no other than he whom they sought; and that which brings up the rear, is the converting power of the word, not set last, because the least among them; but rather because it is the greatest wonder of them all, and comprehends in it all the other; when souls are converted, the blind receive their sight; *you were darkness, but now light in the Lord.* The lame walk, in that the affections, the soul's feet, are set at liberty, and receive strength to run the ways of God with delight. Lepers are cleansed, in that filthy lusts are cured, and foul souls are sanctified; and so of the rest. Now though the former miracles cease, yet this which is the greatest, still accompanying the word, affords such a demonstration for its divinity, as reason itself cannot oppose: is it beyond the skill and strength of the mightiest angel, to make the least pile of grass in the field; much more the new creature in the heart, the noblest of God's works?

That therefore which doth thus new mould the heart, and make the creature as unlike to his former self, as the lamb is to the wolf, and the ox to the lion; the one meek and harmless, the other fierce and ravenous; that must needs be from God; and such changes are the daily product of the word.

How many have you known once under the power of their lusts, throwing like madman their fire-brands about, possessed with so many devils as sins, and hurried hither and thither by these furies, yet at the hearing of one gospel-sermon, have you not seen them quite metamorphosed, and with him in the gospel, out of whom the devil was cast, sitting at Jesus's feet in their right mind, bitterly bewailing their former course, and hating their once beloved lusts, more than ever they were fond of them? I hope some of you that read these lines, can say thus much concerning yourselves, as the apostle doth of himself, and others of his brethren, Tit. iii. 3. *We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, &c.*

And can you, who are the very epistle of Christ, writ not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, in the fleshly tables of your hearts, stand yet in doubt whether that word came from God, which is thus able to bring you home to God? How long might a man sit at the foot of a philosopher, before he could find such a commanding power go forth with his lectures of morality, to take away his old heart full of lust (as the sea is of creeping things innumerable) and put a new and holy one in the room of it?

Some indeed in their school have been a little refined from the dregs of sensuality, as Polemo, who went a drunkard to hear Plato, and returned a temperate man from his lecture; and no wonder, if we consider what violence such broad and beastly sins offer to the very light of a natural conscience, that lesser light appointed by God to rule the night of the heathen world: but take the best philosopher of them all, and you shall find sins that are of a little finer spinning (such as spiritual wickednesses and heart-sins are) that are acted behind the curtain, in the retiring room of the inner man; these were so far from being the spoils of their victorious arms, that they could never come to the sight of them. But the word treads on those high places of spiritual wickednesses, and leaves not any strong hold of them untaken. It pursues sin and satan to their bogs and fastnesses, it digs the sinner's lusts like vermin out of their holes and burrows, where they earth themselves. The heart itself is no safe sanctuary for sin to sit in, the word will take it thence (as Joab from the horns of the altar) to slay it; those corruptions that escaped the sword of the moralist, and honest heathen, even these fall by the edge of the word.

I cannot

I cannot give a better instance for this converting power of the word, than by presenting you with the miraculous victories obtained by it over the hearts of men, when the apostles were sent out first to preach the grace of Christ, and, as it were, to begin the combination of the gospel-ministry; wherever they came, they found the world up in arms against them, and the black prince of it, the devil, at the head of their troops, to make their utmost resistance against them; yet what unheard of victories were got by them? Was it not strange, that without drawing any other sword, than the everlasting gospel, they should turn the world upside down, as their enemies themselves confessed? slighting the devil's works, casting down his holds wherever they came, and overcoming those barbarous heathens, whom the devil had held in his peaceable possession so many thousand years, to renounce their idolatries in which they had been bred and trained up all their days, to receive a new Lord, and him a crucified Jesus, and this at the report of a few silly men, loaded with the vilest reproaches that the wit of man could invent, or malice rake together, to besmear their persons, and render the doctrine they preached odious to the world: this, I say, is such an unheard of conquest, as could not be obtained by any less than the arm of the Almighty; especially if we cast in two or three circumstances to give a further accent to the heightening of this consideration: As,

First, The meanness of the persons employed to preach this doctrine; mean in their condition and rank, being of the floor and lowest of the people, and many of them as mean in their intellectual accomplishments, as external port and garb in the world, having no help from human learning to raise their parts, and set a varnish upon their discourses. Men very unfit for such an enterprize, God knows, had the stress and success of their works depended on their own furniture, which put their very enemies to a stand whence they had their wisdom; knowing well, how low their parentage, and unsuitable their breeding were to give them any advantage toward such a high undertaking, Acts iv. 13.

Surely these poor men could contribute no more by any thing that was their own, to that wonderful success which followed their labours, than the blowing of the ram's horns could to the laying of Jericho's walls flat with the ground, or the sounding of Jehoshaphat's musical instruments to the routing of so formidable an army of his enemies; so that we must attribute it to the breath of God, by which they sounded the trumpet of the gospel, and his sweet spirit charming the hearts of their hearers, that such mighty works were done by them.

Secondly, If we consider the nature of the doctrine they held forth and commended to the world, which was not only strange and new, enough to make the hearers shy of it, but so contrary

to the humour of man's corrupt nature, that it hath not one thought in the sinner's heart to befriend it.

No wonder indeed that Mahomet's spiced cup went down so glib, it being so luscious and pleasing to man's carnal palate.—We are soon wooed to espouse that for truth, which gratifies the flesh, and easily persuaded to deliver up ourselves into the hands of such opinions as offer fair quarter to our lusts, yea promise them satisfaction. Indeed we cannot much wonder to see Christianity itself generally and readily embraced, when it is presented in Rome's whorish dress, with its purity adulterated, and its power emasculated; but take the doctrine of the gospel in its own native excellency, before it falls into these hucksters hands, and it is such as a carnal heart cannot like, because it lays the axe to the root of every sin, and bids defiance to all that take part with it: it will suffer no religion to set her threshold by it: this may make us step aside (as Moses once to behold the bush) to see this great wonder. A doctrine believed and embraced, that is pure nonsense to carnal reason, teaching us to be saved by another's righteousness, wise with another's wisdom, to trust in him as a God, that was himself a child, to rely on him to deliver us from the power of sin and satan, that fell himself under the wrath of men. O how great a gulph of objections which reason brings against this doctrine, must be shot before a man can come to close with it! and yet this doctrine to find such welcome that never any prince at the beat of his drum had his subjects flock more in throngs to list themselves in his muster-roll, than the apostles had multitudes of believers offering themselves to come under baptism, the military oath given by them to their converts.

Thirdly, Add but one more, consider how little worldly encouragement this word they preached, gave to its disciples, and you will say, God was in it of a truth.

Had it been the way to thrive in the word to turn Christian, or had it won the favour of kings and princes to have been their disciples, and taught them how to climb the hill of honour, we could not have wondered to have seen so many worship the rising sun; but alas, the gospel which they preached, comes not with these bribes in its hand, no golden apples thrown in the way to entice them on; Christ bids his disciples stoop not to take up crowns for their heads, but a cross for their backs, *If any one will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.* They must not dream of getting the world's treasure, which they have not, but prepare to part with what they have: to be sure, when the apostles preached it, the way it led to, was not to princes palaces with their preferment, but to prisons and dungeons, racks and gibbets; now to see poor creatures so far forget all their worldly interest, estates and honour, children of their loins, and wives

wives of their bosom, so as to trample upon them, yea joyfully welcome the bloodiest deaths their enemies could invent, and thank their persecutors for the favour of admitting them to share with the torments of their brethren, as if they had gone to divide a spoil, and not to be made one.

This surely speaks a heavenly power to be in that doctrine, on whose altar, and for whose defence, they were so willing to be sacrificed: but though the profession of the gospel did cost them so dear, yet would it but have indulged its disciples to have aimed at their own honour, and pleased themselves with the renown that they should win by their sufferings, and that their names should be writ and read in the leaves of fame when they were dead and gone, some Roman spirit haply might have been found to have endured as much: or if it had taught them, that they should have ascended into their fiery chariot of martyrdom, to receive heaven's glory as the purchase of their patience and prowess, this might have hardened some popish shaveling against the fear of those bloody deaths they met with; but the doctrine they preached allows neither, but teaches them when they have done their best, and suffered the worst that their enemies wrath can inflict for the cause of God, then to renounce the honour of all, and write themselves unprofitable servants.

All these considerations twisted together, make a strong cord to draw any that have staggered in this particular, to a firm belief of the divine parentage of the scriptures.

CHAP. XII.

Why the Word of God is called the Sword of the Spirit: and from it the Point raised.

HAVING dispatched the first part, which presented us with the weapon itself commended to the Christian's use, i. e. *The word of God:* the second part of the text now comes under our consideration, and that is the notion under which this weapon is commended, or the metaphor in which it is covered, i. e. *The sword of the Spirit.*

And here a double enquiry would be made.

First, Why the word of God is compared to a sword.

Secondly, Why the sword is attributed to the spirit, and bears his name, *The sword of the Spirit.*

For the first let this suffice; the sword being both of general and constant use among soldiers, and also that weapon with which

they not only defend themselves, but do the greatest execution upon their enemies, most fitly sets forth the necessity and excellent use of the word of God, by which the Christian both defends himself, and offends, yea cuts down before him all his enemies.

For the second, Why is the sword attributed to the spirit? Some take the abstract here to be put for the concrete, the sword of the spirit, for the spiritual sword; as if it were no more but take the spiritual sword, which is the word of God; according to that of the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 4. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty;* that is spiritual. Indeed, satan, being a spirit, must be fought with spiritual arms. And such is the word; a spiritual sword. But this, though true, reacheth not the full sense of the place, *pneuma* is taken *personaliter*, for the person of the holy spirit. And in these three respects the written word is the sword of the spirit.

First, He is the author of it: a weapon it is which his hand alone formed and fashioned; it came not out of any creature's forge; *Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. i. 21.

Secondly, The spirit is the only true interpreter of the word. Hence that known passage of Bernard, *Quo spiritu factæ sunt scripturæ, eo spiritu legi desiderant, ipso etiam intelligendæ sunt;* the scriptures must be read, and can be understood by that spirit alone by whom they were made. He that made the lock, can only help us to a key that will fit its wards, and open its sense; *No scripture is of private interpretation*, 2 Pet. i. And why not? It follows, because it came not from any private spirit at first; *For the prophecy came not by the will of man, &c.* ver. 21.— And who knows the mind of the spirit so well as himself?

Thirdly, It is only the spirit of God can give the word its efficacy and power in the soul. It is his office, as I said, *Sigillare animum charactere rerum creditarum*, except he lays his weight on the truths we read and hear, to apply them close, and as it were cut their very image in our minds and hearts, they leave no more impression, than a seal set upon a rock or stone would do; still the mind fluctuates, and the heart is unsatisfied, notwithstanding our own and others utmost endeavours to the contrary. It was not the disciples rowing, but Christ's coming, that could lay the storm, or bring them to shore. Not all our study and enquiry, can fix the mind, or pacify the heart in the belief of the word, till the spirit of God comes. *Do you now believe?* saith Christ to his disciples. John xvi. 31. How oft, alas, had the same things sounded in their ears, and knocked at their door for entertainment, but never could be received, till now that the spirit put in his finger to lift up the latch.

B. Davenant, on Colossians, tells us a story out of Gerson, concerning

cerning a holy man whom himself knew to be sadly beaten and buffeted with frequent doubts and scruples, even so as to call into question an article of faith, but afterwards was brought into so clear a light, and full evidence of its truth, that he doubted no more of it, than of his own being alive, and this certainty (saith Gerson) did not arise *ex nova aliqua ratione & demonstratione, sed ex humiliatione, & captivitate intellectus, atque admirabili quadam Dei illuminatione a montibus æternis*, did not come from any new argument he had found out to demonstrate the truth of it, but from the spirit of God humbling and captivating his proud understanding, and admirably irradiating the same.

The words thus opened, present us with this important doctrinal conclusion.

Doct. *That the written word*, or if you will, *The scripture, is the sword by which the spirit of God enables the saints to overcome all their enemies.*

The spirit will do nothing for them without the word, and they can do nothing to purpose without him. The word is the sword, and the spirit of Christ the arm which weilds it in and for the saints. All the great conquests which Christ and his saints atchieve in the world, they are got with this sword; when Christ comes forth against his enemies, this sword is girded on his thigh, Psalm xlv. 5. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty;* and his victory over them ascribed to it, ver. 4. *And in thy majesty, ride prosperously, because of truth.* That is, the word of truth. We find, Rev. i. 16. *Christ holding the seven stars in his right hand*, intimating the choice care he hath over his people, particularly the ministers, who are more shot at than any other; and how doth he protect them, but by this *sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth?* This is the great privilege which the poorest believer in the church hath by the covenant of grace, such a one as Adam had not in the first covenant. He, when fallen, had a flaming sword to keep him out of paradise, but had no such sword, when innocent, to keep him from sinning, and so from being turned out of that happy place and state. No, he was left to stand upon his own defence, and by his own vigilance to be a life-guard to himself. But now the word of God stands between the saints and all danger.

This will the better appear, if we single out the chief enemies with whom the saints war is waged, and shew how they all fall before the word, and receive their fatal blow from this one sword, as Abimelech slew the *threescore sons of Jerubbaal upon one stone;* Judges ix. 5.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Wherein is shewn, How the Persecutors of God's Truth and Church are conquered by this Sword.

THE bloody persecutor, who breathes slaughter against the saints, and pursues them with fire and faggot: such a race of giants there ever was, and will be, as long as the devil hath any kindred alive in the world, who when it lies in their power, to maintain their father's kingdom of darkness, will not fear to trample under their feet those stars of heaven, whose light acquaints the world with their horrid impieties, and so hazards the weakening of the devil's interest in the minds of men.

Hence those bloody wars raised, cruel fires of martyrdom kindled, and massacres practised upon the saints, with many devilish witty inventions of torments, that these innocent souls might linger in their pains, and stay the longer in the jaws of death, thereby to feel themselves to die, as one of them barbarously and inhumanly said! Well, what ladders doth God use to scale these mountains of pride? Where are the weapons with which the people of God resist and overcome these monsters of men that thus defy the Lord and his hosts? Wouldst thou know where? Truly they are to be seen in the *Tower of David, builded for an armoury.* The word of God I mean; here hang the shields and bucklers, the swords and darts by which the worthies of God have in all ages defended themselves stoutly against the rage of persecutors, and also triumphed gloriously over their greatest force and power. Out of this brook they take those smooth stones, by which they prostrate these Goliahs. This sort of the church's enemies are overcome two ways, either by their conversion or destruction. Now the word of God is the sword that effects both: *It hath two edges*, Heb. iv. 12. and so cuts on both sides.

SECT. I.—To the elect, who for a time, through ignorance and prejudice, are joined with the saints enemies, as busy sticklers, and bloody persecutors, as the worst of the pack.

The word of God is a sacrificing knife, to rip open their hearts, and let out the hot putrified blood of their sins, which made them so mad against the church of God, yea, and prepare them also by converting grace, as an offering acceptable unto God, as the apostle excellently sheweth, Rom. xv. 16. Thus the murderers of our blessed Lord, we find them by one sermon of Peter so strongly wrought upon, that they presently vomit up his blood, as sick of it, as ever they were for it; and at one prick that the point of this sword gave them, crying for quarter at God's hands, yea throwing down their persecuting arms, and most freely entering their

their names in his muster-roll, whose life but a few days before they had so cruelly taken away, about three thousand of them at one clap being *baptized in one day*, Acts ii. 41.

Yea, Paul himself, whom I may call, as Erasmus doth Augustine, before his conversion, *The great whale*, that did so much mischief to the church of Christ; what hook did he use to strike him with but the word? never had Christ a more furious enemy in the world, than this man: His heart was so enflamed with rage against the saints, that the fiery steam thereof came out of his lips, as from the mouth of a hot furnace, *breathing slaughter against them wherever he went*, Acts ix. 1. Now what force of arms, besides the word preached, did Christ send to take in the castle of this bloody man's heart?

First, Christ himself took him immediately to task, preaching such a thundering sermon from his heavenly pulpit, as dismounted this proud rider, and sent him, bound in the fetters of his own troubled soul, prisoner even to that place, where he thought to have clapped up others; and then left his spirit to carry on the work of his conversion, by applying and keeping the plaster of the word close to his heart, which how powerfully it wrought on him he himself tells us, Rom. vii. 9. *When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* That is, when the law came by the convictions of the spirit to take in his soul, and pierce his conscience, then sin revived those lusts which lay like a sleepy lion, now in his awakened conscience roaring so dreadfully, that he was as it were struck dead with the terror of them, as a poor damned creature, and would undoubtedly have gone away in that swoon of horror and despair, had not the joyful news of the gospel-grace been by the same word and spirit applied seasonably, to bring him to the life of hope and comfort again.

Thus was this boisterous, furious enemy of the saints, chained and tamed by the terrors of the law, changed and renewed by the gentleness and mercy of the gospel; that he became no more like himself than a ravening wolf is to an innocent lamb, more ready to lay down his own life now, for the defence of the gospel, than before conversion to take away their lives that professed it.

SECT. II.—2. The saints persecuting enemies are vanquished when ruined and destroyed.

Indeed if they continue impenitent, and harden themselves against the truths and servants of God, that is the end they must all look to come to. They are like ravenous beasts, *made to be taken and destroyed*, 2 Pet. ii. 12. and they may know beforehand, as the certainty of their ruin, so what shall procure it; and that is the word of God; see Rev. xi. 5. *If any will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.*

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It is spoken of those that shall dare to oppose and persecute the faithful preachers of the gospel, fire comes out of their mouths to destroy them; though they have their will on the bodies of the saints, butchering and burning them, yet the word they preach will be their destruction. That lives, and stays behind to pay the saints debts, and avenge them on their enemies. God is resolved they must and shall in this manner be killed: The word must give them the fatal stroke. Julian confessed as much, when bleeding under his deadly wound, though the arrow came out of a Persian bow, yet the wretch knew it was sent by a higher than a Persian hand: *Vicisti Galilæe! O Galilean, thou hast overcome,* and been too hard for me; his conscience told him, that his spite against the truth of Christ, was his death; and many more besides him have acknowledged as much when under the hand of justice. The face of the word of God which they have opposed, hath appeared to them as engraven upon their judgments.

O this sword of the word, it hath a long reach! it is at the breast of every enemy God and his saints have in the world; and though at present they cannot see whence their danger should come (they are so great and powerful, so safe and secure as they think), yet the word of God having set down their doom already, God will sooner or later open one door or other to let in their destruction upon them. When the prophet would express the indubitable ruin of the Philistines impending, mark what prognostic he gives, Zeph. ii. 5. *Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea-coast, the word of the Lord is against you.* As if he had said, you are a lost undone people, the whole world cannot save you, for *the word of the Lord is against you.* The threatening of the word, like lightning or mildew, blasts wherever it goes, and its curse burns to the very root. Hence all the seven nations of Canaan fell into the mouth of the Israelites, like the ripe fruit into the mouth of him that shakes the tree. The word of the Lord cursing them, had gone before them to make their conquest certain and easy. This Balaak knew, and therefore would have given so much for a few words out of Balaam's mouth to have *cursed Israel in God's name.*

The truth is, though we look upon the monarchs of the world, and their armies, as those which have the sway of the affairs of the world, yet these are no more than the fly on the wheel. It is the word of God that hath the great stroke in all that is done on the world's stage: *I have set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, to build and to plant,* Jer. i. 10. Indeed the whole earth is God's ground: And who hath power to build on his ground, or pull down, but himself? And in his word he hath given his mind what he will have done to his enemies, and for his saints; and therefore, as all the mercies they

they have, they receive and acknowledge them as gracious performances of the promise, so all the judgments executed on their enemies, as accomplishments of the threatenings of the word, called therefore, *The judgment written*, Psal. xlix. 9.

CHAP. XIV.

The Word of God, how victorious a Sword over the Seducer and Heretic, shewn.

THE seducer is another enemy the Christian hath to cope with, and no less dangerous than the other: nay, in this respect, far more formidable.

The persecutor can kill only the body, but the seducer comes to poison the soul. Better to be slain out-right by this sword, than to be taken alive (as the apostle phraseth it) *in this snare of the devil*, which these whom he sends forth a birding for souls, privily lay, even where they are often least suspected. When Paul fell into the mouth of the persecutor, he could yet glory, and rejoice that he had escaped the latter. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*, 2 Tim. iv. 5. See how this holy man triumphs and flourisheth his colours, as if the field were fought, and the day won; whereas, good man, he was now going to lay his head on the block under the hand of bloody Nero's headsman, as you may perceive, ver. 6. *I am now ready to be offered up.* Alluding to the kind of death ('tis like) he was shortly to undergo.

But you will possibly say, What great cause had he then to cry *victoria*, when his affairs were in such a desperate deplored condition? Yes, this made him triumph, *He had kept the faith;* and that was a thousand times more joy and comfort to him, than the laying down his life was trouble. If he had left the faith by cowardice, or chopped it away for any false doctrine, he had lost his soul by losing of that; but having kept the faith, he knew he did but part with his life to receive a better at God's hands, than was taken from him by man's.

The Locusts, mentioned Rev. ix. (which Mr. Mede takes to be the Saracens, who were so great a scourge and plague to the Roman world newly christianized) we find *they had tails like scorpions, and stings in their tails*, ver. 10. which the learned writer afore-named interprets to be their cursed Mahometan doctrine, with which they poisoned the souls of the people wherever their

their conquering sword came. It seems, though the sword of war in the hand of a barbarous bloody enemy, be a heavy judgment to a people, yet the propagation of cursed errors is a greater; this is the sting in the tail of that judgment. I do not doubt but many that were godly might fall by the sword of that enemy in such a general calamity; but only those that were not among God's *sealed ones* felt the sting in their tail, by being poisoned with their cursed imposture; and therefore they alone are said *to be hurt by them*, ver. 4. We may be cut off by an enemy's sword, and not be hurt, but we cannot drink in their false doctrines, and say so.

Now, the word of God is the sword whereby the spirit enables the saints to defend themselves against this enemy; yea, to rout and ruin this subtle band of satan. We read of Apollos, Acts xviii. that *he mightily convinced the Jews;* he did, as it were, knock them down with the weight of his reasoning: And out of what armoury fetched he the sword with which he so prevailed? See ver. 28. *Shewing by the Scriptures* (not their Cabala) *that Jesus was Christ;* therefore is said to be *mighty in the scriptures*, ver. 24. A mighty man of valour, and so very expert through his excellent knowledge in them, that the erroneous Jews could no more stand before him holding his sword in his hand, than a child with a wooden dagger can against a giant formidably armed with killing weapons.

When Paul warns Timothy to stand upon his defence carefully against seducers, which snapped so many everywhere, he can devise no better counsel how he might keep out of their hands, than by sending him to the scriptures, and bidding him shut himself up within these, as in a town of war, 2 Tim. iii. 14. *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned;* and in the next verse he opens himself, and shews what lesson he means that he had learned, by telling him, that *from a child he had known the holy scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation;* and by consequence, wiser than all his enemies, if he stuck close to them.

Other arms we may load ourselves with, by tumbling over many authors; but he that hath this sword, and hath been but taught of the Spirit the use of this weapon, is provided well enough to meet the stoutest champion for error the devil hath on his side in an encounter. With this, poor women have been able to disarm great doctors of their studied arguments, ruffling all their art and logic with one plain place of scripture: As she who brained Abimelech, that great commander, by tumbling a piece of a mill-stone on his head. Out of this armoury came those weapons Paul tells are so *mighty through God, casting down imaginations*,

imaginations, or reasonings, by which an ancient will have the Greek philosophers' syllogisms to be meant.

Indeed he that hath the word on his side, and a holy skill to use it, hath as much advantage of his adversary that comes with other armour (let him be ever so good a fencer), as a man with a good sword hath over him that comes forth only with a bulrush in his hand.

All error dreads the light of the word, and fears more to be examined by that, than a thief does to be tried before a strict judge. *Hereticorum sententias prodidisse est superasse*, saith Hieron: unfold them, or bring them and the word face to face, and, like Cain, they hang down their head, they are put to shame. This is the only certain ordeal to try suspected opinions at. If they can walk upon this fiery law unhurt, unreproved, they may safely pass for truths, and none else.

Paul tells us of some *that will not endure sound doctrine*, 2 Tim. iv. Alas, how should they, when their minds are not sound? It is too searching for them. Gouty feet cannot but go on soft way that gently yields to them: Such must have doctrine that will comply with their humour, which the word will not do, but rather judge them, and this they think it will do too soon at the great day. Therefore now they shun it so much, lest it should torment them before their time. Thus the Quakers, they have their skulking hole to which they run from the scripture, at whose bar they know their opinions would be cast undoubtedly, and therefore appeal to another where they may have a more favourable hearing, the light within them, or, in plain English, their natural conscience, a judge which is known too well to be corrupt, and easily bribed to speak what the lusts of men will often have him do. Ah, poor creatures, what a sad change have they made! to leave the word, that is an inflexible rule of faith, and can no more lie or deceive them, than God himself can do; to trust the guidance of themselves to themselves, a more ignorant, sottish, unfaithful guide, than which the devil could not have chosen for them.

He that is his own teacher, saith Bernard, *is sure to have a fool for his master:* and Solomon, yea, a greater than Solomon, God himself by Solomon saith, *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise*, Prov. xii. 15. but he most wise, that makes the word of God the men of his counsel. The papist, he hath his thicket and wood at his back also, antiquity, and traditions, to which he flies before the face of the scripture for sanctuary, as Adam did to a bush when God came walking to him. As if any antiquity were so authentic as God's own oracles; and any traditions of men to be laid in the balance with the scripture.

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To name no more, the Socinian, he folds up himself in his own proud reason, and takes such state on him, that the scripture must come to that to be sensed, and not that stoop to it: he must have a religion and scripture that fits the model his own reason draws, or will have neither: the root of many prodigious errors and heresies; like those of whom Tertullian speaks, *Qui Platonicum & Aristotelicum Christianismum procuderunt*, who went to the philosopher's forge to shape a Christianity. What is this, but to carry gold to be weighed at the chandler's scales, and to look for the sun by the light of the moon? A modern divine saith, most heresies have sprung either *ex Samo satanï fastu, vel ex Ætii ignorantia, vel ex Arrii dialectica*, from pride, ignorance, or the sophistry of reason. The last of which seems to be the shelf on which Paul observes some to have split, *and concerning the faith to have erred*, 1 Tim. vi. 21. and therefore so affectionately exhorts Timothy to keep off this dangerous shore, and steer his course by the word, ver. 20. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, &c.* For this which is here committed to him, I take for no other than *the form of sound words* he exhorts him to hold fast in the second epistle, chap. i. ver. 13.

Object. But we see heretics quote scripture for their most prodigious errors, and draw this sword for their defence, as well as the orthodox: how then is it such a powerful instrument and engine against error?

Answ. What will not men of subtle heads, corrupt hearts, and bold faces, dare to do for the carrying on of their wicked party, when once they have espoused an error or any sinful way? Korah and his ungodly company dare give out that *the Lord is among them*, and they have as much to do with the priesthood as Aaron himself, on whom the holy oil was poured, Numb. xvi. 13. And Zedekiah, that arch-flatterer, fears not to father his lie on the God of truth himself, 1 Kings xxii. 11. *He made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the Lord, with these thou shalt push the Syrians until thou hast consumed them;* whereas God never spake such a word. It is no marvel to see any lay their bastard-brats at God's door, and cry, they have scripture on their side.

By this impudence they may abuse credulous souls into a belief of what they say, as a cheater may pick the purses of ignorant people, by shewing them something like the king's broad seal, which was indeed his own forgery; yea, God may suffer them to seduce others of more raised parts and understanding, as a just judgment on them for rebelling against the light of their own conscience. As Pharaoh, by the false miracles of the magicians, was set off further from any compliance with Moses. And those of the anti-christian faction, 2 Thess. i. 10, 11. who, *because they received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved, for*

for this cause God sends them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.

But sincere souls that search humbly for truth, and have no other designs in their enquiry after it, but that they may know the will of God and obey it, they shall find, upon their faithful prayers to God, a light most clear, shining from the scripture, to guide them safe from those pit-falls of damning errors, into which others fall, towards whom the dark side of this cloud stands. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, Psal. cxi. 10. The fox, they say, when hard put to it, will fall in subtilly with the dogs, and hunt with them as one of their company, but even then his strong scent, which he cannot leave behind him, betrays him.

Thus heretics, for to shelter their errors, will crowd in among scripture-truths, and by their fair colours, and false glosses, make them seem to be of their company, but they cannot so perfume their rotten opinions, but their rank scent and savour will be smelt, and discerned by those who have their senses exercised.—Never any heretic got by appealing to the scriptures. What Christ saith in another case, Matt. xxvi. 51. *All they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword*, is most true of all heretics; they are confounded and confuted by that very sword of the word, which they lift up to defend themselves withal.

CHAP. XV.

Our third Enemy, made up of an Army of Corruptions and Lusts within, and the Power of this Sword of the Spirit to conquer them.

THIRDLY, Our own lusts make the next adversary we have to grapple with.

Thus the further we go, the worse enemy we meet. These are more formidable than both the former. Partly because they are within us, men of our own house, lusts of our own bosom that rise up against us; and partly because they hold correspondence with a foreign foe also, the devil himself, who as he did beat man at first with his own rib, so he continues to do us the worst mischief with our own flesh. The fire of lust is ours, but the flame commonly is his, because his temptations are the bellows that blow it up. And when such a fire meets with such a strong wind to spread and carry it on its wings, whither will it fly? O how

hard to slake and quench it! a whole legion of devils are as soon cast out of the body, as one lust out of the soul; yea, sooner.—Satan likes his lodging better in the heart, than in the house, and is lother out. He came the more willingly out of the man into the *swine*, Matt. viii. 31. because by coming out of his body, and contenting himself a while with a meaner house (the swine I mean) he hoped for a fairer way thereby to get fuller possession of their souls, which indeed he obtained, Christ leaving them most justly to his rule, that were so soon weary of his sweet company.

Now the word is the only weapon; like Goliah's sword, none like this for the hewing down, and cutting off this stubborn enemy. The word of God can master our lusts, when they are in their ruff and pride: if ever lust rageth more than other, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is heady, and lust then hot and impetuous. Our sun is climbing higher still, and we think it a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasure with; the vigour of his strength to take in more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can do, and further from fear of death's gun-shot, as he thinks, than old men who are upon the very marches of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them, into which they are sure suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the word of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his ear, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him fly in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from their feast, when they saw their brother Ammon murdered at the table.

When David would give the young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts, (not one, but all), *how he may cleanse his whole course and way*, he bids him only *wash in this Jordan*, Psalm cxix. 9. *By what means, or wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.* It is called *the rod of his strength*, Psal. cx. 2. God, we know, wrought those great miracles whereby he plagued the Egyptians, and saved the Israelites with the rod in Moses his hand, by that he tamed proud Pharaoh, making him and his people at last to let go their hold of the Israelites, yea, in a manner to thrust them out from them, and be as glad of their room, as before they were of their company. By that he divided the sea for Israel's passage, and covered the Egyptians in its waves. By that he smote the rock: and by this rod of his word he doth as great wonders in the souls of men as these: by this he smites their consciences, cleaves the rocks of their hard hearts, divides the waves of their lusts, and brings poor sinners from under the power of sin and satan.

satan. Never could Austin get a jail-delivery from his lusts, till he heard that voice, *Tolle lege, tolle lege;* upon which, as himself tells us, Lib. Confess. 3. he presently took up the Bible; and that one place, Rom. xiii. to which his eye was directed, once read, like a mighty earthquake, did so shake all the powers of his soul, that the prison doors of his heart immediately flew open, and those chains of lusts which with all his skill and strength he could never file off, did now on a sudden fall off, and he so strangely metamorphosed, that *Quas amittere metus erat, jam dimittere gaudium fuit;* those lusts, to lose which was once all his fear, now to pack them away, was his joy. Never man, by his own confession, was more a slave to his lusts, and tied with a stronger chain of delight to them, than himself was; he did as he saith, *Volutare in cœno tanquam cinamonis & unguentis preciosis;* he tumbled in the puddle of his filthy lusts with as much delight, as if he had been rolling in a bed of spices, and anointing himself with the most precious ointment; yet this one word came with such commanding power to them, that it tore them out of his very heart, and turned his love into a cordial hatred of them, who before would have let his heart sooner be plucked out of his bosom, than these taken out of his heart.

And as the word is the weapon by which he with a strong hand brings poor sinners out of the power of satan and sin, into a state of freedom, so he useth it to defend his saints from all after-storms of temptations, by which satan, now thrown out of his kingdom, endeavours to recover the same. Those kingdoms indeed that are got by the sword, must be kept by the sword.—David will tell us how he stood upon his guard, and made good his ground against this enemy, Psal. xvii. 4. *Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.* As if he had said, Would you know how it comes to pass, that I escape those ungodly works and practices, which men ordinarily take liberty to do? I must ascribe it to the good word of God, 'tis this I consult with, and by it am kept from those foul ways whereinto others, that make no use of the word for their defence, are carried by satan the destroyer of mankind. Can we go against sin and satan with a better weapon than Christ used to vanquish the tempter with? And certainly Christ did it *per modum exempli*, to set us an example how we should come armed into the field against them; for Christ could with one beam shot from his deity (if he had pleased to exert it) have as easily laid the bold fiend prostrate at his foot, as afterwards he did them that came to attack him; but he chose rather to conceal the majesty of his divinity, and let satan come up closer to him, that so he might confound him with the word, and thereby

give a proof of that sword to his saints, which he was to leave with them for their defence against the same enemy.

The devil is set out by the leviathan, Isa. xxvii. 1. him God threatens *to punish with his strong sword;* alluding to that great fish, the *whale*, which fears no fish like the sword-fish, by whom this great devourer of all other fish is often killed; for receiving one prick from his sword, he hasteth to the shore, and beats himself against it till he dies. Thus the devil, the great devourer of souls, who sports himself in the sea of this world, even as the leviathan in the waters, and swallows the greatest part of mankind without any power to make resistance against him, is himself vanquished by the word. When he hath to do with a saint armed with this sword, and instructed how to use this weapon, he then, and not till then, meets his match.

CHAP. XVI.

The fourth and last Enemy the Christian engageth, made up of many Troops of Afflictions, together with his Victory over them, obtained by this Sword of the Word.

FOURTHLY, A fourth enemy that meets the Christian, is an army made up of many bands of afflictions, both outward and inward, sometimes one, sometimes another assailing him, yea often a whole body of them pouring their shot together upon him.

This was Paul's case, *Without were fightings, within were fears*, 2 Cor. vii. 5. He endured a great fight of external afflictions and buffetings within his own bosom at once. And that is sad indeed, when a city is on fire within, at the same time that an enemy is battering its walls from without. Yet this is often the condition of the best saints, to have both the rod on their backs, and rebukes from God in their spirits, at once, Psal. xxxix. 11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* God sometimes corrects with outward crosses, but smiles with inward manifestations, and then he whips them, as I may so say, with a rosemary-rod, the one sweetens and alleviates the other. At another time he sends a cross, and incloseth a frown in it. He whips with outward affliction, and, as an angry father, every lash he gives his child, tells him, this is for that fault, and that for this, which exceedingly adds to the smart of the correction, and is the very knot on the whip, to see his father so much displeased with him: and when the poor Christian lies thus under the hand of an afflicting God,

God, or under the rebukes of a frowning God, satan will not be long from the Christian, or wanting to throw his salt and vinegar into the wounds that God hath made in his flesh or spirit, thereby to increase his dolour, and so lead him further into temptation one way or other, if he can have his will.

Indeed God often sends so many troops of various afflictions to quarter upon some one Christian, that it puts him hard to it, to bid them all welcome, and entertain them with patience; yea, it would pose any one (that knows not what service the word of God doth the Christian, and the supplies it brings him in) to conceive how his spirit should be kept, and his faith, from being eaten up, and swallowed into despair by them. But the word of God, this bears all the charge he is at. This is his counsellor and comforter: David tells us plainly, his heart had died within him but for it, Psal. cxix. 92. *If thy law had not been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction.* The word was his spiritual Abishag, from which his soul got all its warmth; all the world's enjoyments heaped on him, would have left him cold at heart, if this had not lain in his bosom, to bring him to a kindly heat of inward peace, and comfort, ver. 50. of the same Psalm: *This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.* Not the crown in hope, (for some think it was not on his head when this Psalm was penned) but the word in his heart to which he was beholden for his comfort. A word of promise is more necessary at such a time to a poor soul, than warm clothes are to the body in cold weather.

When Adam was thrust naked out of paradise into the cold blasts of a miserable world, where from his own guilty conscience within, and crosses without, he was sure to meet with trouble enough; then God gave him a word of promise (as you may observe) to fence his soul, before he taught him to make coats to clothe his body, Gen. iii. 15. compared with 21. The Lord knew full well how indispensably necessary a word of promise was, to keep him from being made a prey the second time to the devil, and from being swallowed up with the dismal sight of those miseries and sorrows into which he had thrown himself and posterity; therefore would not suffer him to lie open to the shock of their assaults one day, but presently puts the sword of a promise into his hand, that with it he might defend and comfort his sorrowful heart in the midst of all his troubles.

It was the speech of a holy man, after God had made that sweet place, Matt. xi. 28. *Come unto me ye that are weary, and heavy laden, &c.* the messenger to open his dungeon of soul trouble, and bring him into the light of inward joy; *that he had better be without meat, drink, light, air, earth, life and all, than without this one comfortable scripture.* If one single promise, like

an ear of corn rubbed in the hand of faith, and applied by the spirit of Christ, can afford such a full satisfying meal of joy to a hunger-bitten, pining soul, O what price can we set on the whole field of the scripture, which stands so thick with promises every way as cordial as this! Love is witty, and sets the head on work to devise names for the person we love dearly, such names as may at once express how highly we prize them, and also yet more endear them to us, by carrying on them the superscription of that sweetness which we conceive to be in them.

Thus many holy persons have commended the promises to us with their appreciating names, The saint's legacies; The breasts of God, full of milk of grace and comfort; the saint's plank to swim upon to heaven. Indeed we might rob the world of all her jewels, and justly hang them on the ear of the promise, apply all the excellencies she boasts of, unto the promises. There is more riches and treasure to be had in one promise, than all the gold and silver of the Indies is worth; *Exceeding great and precious promises*, 2 Pet. i. 3. by them a poor believer may lay claim to heaven and earth at once; for *godliness hath the promise of this life, and the other also.* But that which in this place I would commend their excellency from, is the admirable service they do, and succour they afford, a poor soul in the day of his greatest distress. They are the granary of spiritual provision, whereby our Joseph, our dear Lord Jesus, nourisheth and preserveth alive his brethren in a time of famine. They are the hive of sweetness, where the believing soul in the winter of affliction (when nothing is to be gathered abroad from the creature) both lies warmly, and lives plentifully on the stock of comfort there laid up.

They are, in a word, the *fair havens*, and safe road into which the tempted soul puts his weather-beaten ship, where it lies secure till the heavens clear, and the storm is over, which the world, sin and satan raise upon him: yea, when death itself approacheth, and the devil hath but one cast more for the game, one skirmish more to get or lose the victory for ever, then faith on the promise carries the Christian's soul out of the garrison of his body (where he hath endured so hard a siege) with colours flying, and joy triumphing, to heaven, leaving only his flesh behind in the hands of death, and that also with an assured hope of having it redeemed out of its power ere it be long, at the day of resurrection and restitution of all things.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

The Church of Rome charged of high Presumption, and great Cruelty, in disarming the People of this Sword of the Scriptures.

Use 1. IS the word the sword of the spirit, whereby the Christian vanquisheth his enemies?

Then we may justly charge the church of Rome of cruelty to the souls of people, in disarming them of that weapon with which they alone can defend themselves against their enemies, that seek their eternal ruin. It is true, they have some fig-leaves with which they would fain hide this their shamefnl practice, making the world believe, they do it in mercy to the people, lest they should cut their fingers, and wound themselves with this weapon. We see, say they, how many errors and heresies the world swarms with, by the mistakes of the vulgar; yea, Peter himself they dare *subpœna* as a witness on their side: Who saith, *that there are some things hard to be understood in Paul's Epistles, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. And therefore the scripture which is so dangerous for ordinary people to meddle with, they judge it safest to lay it out of their reach, as we do a sword or edge-tool from children, though they cry never so much for it. See what a fair glove they draw over so foul a hand.

But did Peter, because some unlearned and unstable souls wrested the scripture, forbid them, or any other, how weak soever, to read the scripture? This had carried some weight with it indeed: but we find just the contrary, for in the following verses, the counsel he gives Christians, that they may not be led away with the error of the wicked, is to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, ver. 18. *Lumen est vehiculum influentiæ*, light is the chariot that conveys the influences of the sun; so the knowledge of Christ brings with it the influences of his grace into the heart. And how did Peter mean they should grow in the knowledge of Christ, if he would not have them read the scriptures, which is the only book where it is to be learned? but the papists would have their people learn the knowledge of Christ from their preaching of him, and not from the scriptures, which they cannot so safely converse with. But,

First, How shall they be assured that what they preach is true, except they have the scripture, to which, as unto the true touchstone, they may bring their doctrine to be tried? Thus did the Bereans by Paul's sermon, Acts xvii. 11. A preacher as good, I trow, as any of theirs. And,

Secondly, Suppose they preach the truth, can they warrant

that their words shall not be perverted and mistaken by their hearers? And if they cannot, why then are they suffered to preach in a vulgar tongue, when the word of God, for the same reason, is forbidden to be read by the people in a known tongue?

Truly, I am of that learned man's mind, That if God himself may not speak in a vulgar tongue, I see far less reason that a friar should, and so the people should know nothing at all of Christ. (Mede on Jer. x. 11.) No, the true reason why they forbid the scripture to be read, is not to keep them from errors and heresies, but to keep them from discovering those which they themselves impose upon them. Such trash as they trade in, would never go off their hand roundly, did they not keep their shop thus dark; which made one of their shavelings so bitterly complain of that unlucky Luther for spoiling their market, saying, *But for him they might have persuaded the people of Germany to have eat hay.* Any thing indeed will go down a blind man's throat. I do not wonder, that their people, thus muzzled in ignorance, do so readily embrace their fopperies, and believe all their forgeries so confidently. The blind man must either sit still, or go whither he pleaseth that leads him. We read of a whole army, when once smitten with blindness, carried out of their way by one single man that had his eyes in his head, 2 Kings vi.

But this we may well wonder at, that men who knew the scriptures (as many of their leaders do) and acknowledge their divinity, dare be so impudent and audacious to intercept this letter sent from the great God to the sons of men, and not suffer them (except a few whom they think fit) to look on it, though it be superscribed and directed by God himself, not to any party or sort of men, but to every man where it comes, Rom. i. 7. 2 Cor. i. 1. This is such a piece of impudence as cannot be paralleled.—Wherefore are laws made but to be promulgated? Scripture writ, but to be read and known of all men? I am sure the apostle, by the same authority with which he wrote his Epistles, commands them to be read in the churches, Colos. iv. 16. And did the ministers of those churches pocket them up, and conceal them from the people's notice, lest they should, by perverting them, be made heretics? It is too true, some wrest the scriptures to their own destruction: And so do some, for want of care in eating, choak themselves with their bread; must all therefore starve for fear of being choaked? Some hurt themselves and friends with their weapons; must therefore the whole army be disarmed, and only a few chief officers be allowed to wear a sword by their sides?

Truly, if this be argument enough to seal up the bible from being read, we must not only deny it to the meaner and more unlearned sort, but also to the great rabbies and doctors of the chair; for the grossest heresies have bred in the finest wits. Prodigious errors

errors have been as much beholden to the sophistry of Arius, as the ignorance of Ætius: So that the upshot of all will be this, the unlearned must not read the scripture, because they may pervert them through ignorance; nor the learned, because they may wrest them by their subtilty. Thus we see when proud men will be wiser than God, their foolish minds darken, till they lose the reason and understanding of men.

CHAP. XVIII.

Against the same Church of Rome, for imputing Insufficiency to the Scriptures.

Use 2. THIS falls heavy upon them that charge the holy scriptures with insufficiency, as not containing all things necessary to salvation.

What a horrid blasphemy is this, and reproach to the great God, that he should send his people into the field, and put such a wooden sword into their hand as is not sufficient to defend them, and cut their way through their enemies powers to heaven, whither he orders them to march? Would any gracious prince, that loves the lives of his subjects, give them arms that are not fit to oppose such an enemy as comes out against them, if he knows how to furnish them with better? Nay, would he give them such weak and insufficient weapons for their defence, and then charge them to use no other? This were unworthily to send them as sheep to the shambles, and could signify nothing, but that he had a mind their throats should be all cut by their enemies. And doth not God himself highly commend this sword of the scripture to his people, when he tells Timothy, *It is able to make him* (as a Christian) *wise unto salvation*, 1 Tim. iv. 15. and as *a man of God* (or minister of the gospel) *perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, ver. 17. Yea, doth he not also forbid us the use of any other weapon, than what the scripture furnisheth us withal? *To the law and to the testimony he sends us*, Isa. viii. and makes it a renouncing of our allegiance to him, to go any where else for counsel or protection than to his written word; *Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?* then follows, *To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*, ver. 19, 20.

It seems then God doth not count we seek to him, except we enquire for him at the law and the testimony, and bring all we hear

bear to their test and touch. Surely, that which is intended by God to be to his people (what the standard and town bushel are to the market) a rule to measure all doctrines by, is itself exact and sufficient. But the world, by this time, knows where the insufficiency of the scripture lies. Sufficient they are enough for God's ends, but not for the Pope's ends. They are able to furnish every true Christian in the world with wisdom enough how he should save his soul. But the pope is grieved, that they are not so useful to help him to save the triple crown on his head, and do not furnish him with grounds from which he may defend the lordly power, and god-like infallibility he claims, with other doctrines held forth by him. And this is the only defect he can charge the scriptures with, to supply which, the rabble rout of traditions is brought into the church; all taught to speak the pope's sense before they see the light, and that reputation may be gained to these unknown witnesses; this way their fine wits, with the devil's help (who owes the scripture an old spite ever since the first promise rescued Adam, his prisoner, out of his hand) have taken, that the scriptures be declared insufficient and uncertain; *Minima particula veritatis revelatæ.* The least particle of revealed truth, as one of them impudently writes, and so needs the patchery of these to make it perfect. Just as Adronicus served the emperor Alexius, who gave out, he was weak and insufficient to govern alone, and so first got a joint power with him, and at last an absolute power over him to unthrone him; and whether their traditions have dealt better by the scripture, the world may judge. When traditions go up, the written word is sure to go down; *ye have made void*, saith Christ to the Pharisees, *the commandment by your traditions*, Mat. xv. 6. you have unlorded it, and supplanted its authority in the minds of men, who leave the world to hearken to your traditions.

CHAP. XIX.

Sheweth the great Wickedness of those who lift up this Sword in Defence of any Sin.

THIRDLY, This condemns those, of prodigious wickedness, that instead of using this sword to defend them against sin and satan, lift it up audaciously for their defence in their wicked and abominable practices.

Thus the heretic, he takes up the word to justify his corrupt tenets, forcing it, in favour of his way, to bear witness against itself.

itself. And many prophane wretches we meet with, who to ward off a reproof, will dare to seek protection for their ungodly courses, from the word, which they have at their tongue's end, and interpose to break the blow that is made at them.

Tell the sensualist of his voluptuous, brutish life, and you shall have him sometimes reply, Solomon was not so precise and scrupulous, who saith, *A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat and to drink, and to be merry*, Eccl. viii. 15. As if Solomon, yea God himself that directed his pen, meant to fill the drunkard's quaffing cup for him, and were a friend of gluttons and wine-bibbers: Whereas, to eat and drink, and be merry, in Solomon's mouth there, amounts to no more, than *to serve God with gladness in the abundance of those good things which God gives us to enjoy*, in the mouth of Moses, Deut. xxviii. 47.

Such is the desperate wickedness of man's heart, that the sweetest and most comfortable portions of scripture are most wrested by many to serve their lusts. The declarations of God's free grace made on purpose to melt sinner's hearts, and draw them from their lusts to Christ, how oft are they abused to wedge and harden them in their sins, and keep them from him! Examples of holy men's falls, recorded merely to make them fear that stand, and to preserve hope of mercy alive in those that have fallen, whereby they are in danger of being swallowed up with despair, how are they perverted by many, who lie like beasts wallowing in there own dung, and think all is well, because such eminent saints fell so foully, and yet came off so fairly at last, with their sins pardoned, and souls saved! the good success that late repentance hath now and then had in a few, yea very few scripture instances, it is strange to think what use and advantage satan makes of them, to beg time of the sinner, and make him linger still in the Sodom of his sins: The eleventh hour, saith he, is not yet come; why will ye repent so long before you need? Why should he set out in the morning, who may dispatch his journey well enough an hour before night? The penitent thief that, as one saith, stole to heaven from the cross, hath, I fear, been an occasion, though on God's part an innocent one, to bring many a sinner to the gallows; yea, well, if not to a place of longer execution in another world!

O take heed of this, sinners, as you love your souls! Is it not enough to have your lusts, but you must also fetch your encouragement from the word, and forge God's hand to bear you out? The devil indeed thus abuseth scripture, Mat. iv. 4. thinking thereby to make Christ more readily hearken to his cursed motion, and wilt thou tread in his steps? By this thou makest one sin two, and the last the worst. To be drunk was a fearful sin in Belshazzar; but to quaff in the bowls of the sanctuary was far worse.—No sin is little, but the least sin amounts to blasphemy, when thou committest

committest it on a scripture pretence. The devil cannot easily desire a greater occasion of glorying over God, than thus to wound his name with his own sword. When Julian the apostate saw the gentile philosophers confuted by the human learning of some Christians, he said, We are taken by our own wings; looking upon it as a great disgrace for them to be beaten and worsted by that which they counted their own weapons.

The word is the holy Spirit's sword. O for shame let not satan make his boast over thy God, Christian, by thy means, which he will, if he can persuade thee to wound his name with this his own weapon. He that fetcheth an argument from the holy scriptures to countenance any corrupt opinion or practice, what doth he but go about to make God fight against himself? he shoots at him with an arrow out of his own quiver. He sins, and then doth, as it were, say, God bids him do it. If there be a man on the face of the earth, that God will single out as a mark for his utmost wrath, this is he who shelters his wickedness under the wing of the holy scriptures, and so makes God patron of his sin.

Use 4. *Of Exhortation.*

First, To bless God for furnishing us with this sword for our defence.

Secondly, To study the word, that we may make use of this weapon to defend ourselves against the many potent enemies that are in the field against us.

CHAP. XX.

An Exhortation to Thankfulness for this Sword of the Word, whereby we are enabled to stand in our Defence against our greatest Enemies.

FIRST, Let us be excited and provoked to bless God for this sword with which he hath furnished us so graciously, whereby we may stand on our defence against all our bloody enemies.

If a man had a kingdom in his possession, but no sword to keep the crown on his head, he could not expect to enjoy it long.—This is a world, that there is no living or holding any thing we have in safety, without the help of arms. Least of all, could our souls be safe, if naked and unarmed, which are here in the mouth of danger, and can no way pass to the place of bliss and happiness in heaven prepared for them, but through their enemies quarters.

When Israel took their march out of Egypt towards the promised land, few or none would trust them to travel through their country.

country, but all rose up in arms against them. The Christian will find his march much more troublesome and dangerous to heaven: Satan is not grown tamer than he used to be, nor the wicked world better affected, than it was wont, to the people of God. O what a mercy is it, that we have this sword by our side, which puts us out of danger from any of them all! This is in thy hand, Christian, as the rod was in Moses's. What though an army of devils be behind thee, and a sea of sins before thee roaring upon thee, with this sword, by faith wielding it, thou mayest cut thy way through the waves of the one, and set thyself out of the reach of the other.

Truly the scripture is a mercy incomparably greater than the sun in the heavens: that might be better spared out of its orb, than this out of the church. If that were gone, we should be but knocked off our worldly business, and be only in danger, to lose our bodily life, by missing our way, and stumbling on this pit, and tumbling into that pond: but if deprived of the word, salvation-work would be laid aside, or gone about to little purpose, and our souls must needs miss the right way to happiness, and stumble inevitably upon hell, while we think we are going to heaven, unless a miracle should interpose to prevent the same.

But more particularly, bless God for these three mercies in reference to the scripture.

1. For their translation into vulgar tongues.
2. For the ministry of the word.
3. For the efficacy which the word and ministry have had upon thy heart.

SECT. I.—First, Bless God for the translation of the scriptures.

The word is our sword; by being translated, this sword is drawn out of the scabbard. What use, alas, could a poor Christian, that hath but one tongue in his head (that understands but one language I mean, which his mother taught him) make of this sword when presented to him, as it is sheathed in Greek and Hebrew? Truly, he might even fall a weeping with John at the sight of the sealed book, because he could not read in it, Rev. v. 4.

O bless God that hath sent, not angels, but men, furnished by the blessing of God on their indefatigable labours and studies, with ability to roll away the stone from the mouth of this fountain! and were it not sad to see the water of life brought to you at the expence of their spirits and strength (wasted in the work) to be spilt on the ground, and basely undervalued by you, so as hardly to be put into the catalogue of the mercies which you praise God for! O God forbid! it cannot be, if ever you had but the sweetness of any one promise in it milked out unto you, or the power of one of its divine truths impressed on your hearts.

Melchior

Melchior Adam tells us that Bugenhagius (whom Luther used, with others, for his help in translating the bible) when the work was brought to a happy period, he was so affected with the incomparable mercy therein to the churches of Christ in Germany, that every year he invited his friends to a solemn feast that day whereon the work was finished, which they called, *The feast of the translation of the bible.*

When Queen Elizabeth, our English Deborah, opened the prisons at her coming to the crown (as at such times is usual to scatter acts of grace) one as piously as ingeniously told her, that there were yet some good men left in prison undelivered, and desired they might also partake of her princely favour, meaning the four evangelists, and Paul, who had been denied to walk abroad in the English tongue when her sister swayed the sceptre: to this she answered, They should be asked, whether they were willing to have their liberty, which soon after appearing, they had their gaol-delivery, and have ever since had their liberty to speak to you in your own tongue at the assemblies of your public worship, yea to visit you in your own private houses also. Now, is that happy day come, and long hath been, which holy Mr. Tindal told a popish doctor of, when a poor ploughman should be able to read the scriptures, and allowed as freely to converse with them as any doctor of them all! A blessed day indeed it is to the souls of men.

Now, Christian, when thou art prisoner to God's providence, and kept by his afflicting hand at home, thou hast the word of God to bear thee company in thy solitude; and so, though thou canst not sit up with thy brethren and sisters at thy father's table, in his public ordinances, yet thou dost not wholly go without thy meal; thou canst not, it is like, carve so well for thyself as the minister used to do for thee, yet it is an incomparable mercy thou hast liberty to pick up out of the word for thy present counsel and comfort, as thou art enabled by the spirit of God upon thy humble prayer for his assistance. Admirable hath been the support the saints have found from this holy book in their confinements. God hath graciously ordered it, that the most useful and necessary truths for the afflicted saints hang, as I may so say, on the lower boughs of this tree of life, within the reach of a poor Christian, who is but of an ordinary stature in knowledge.

O think, and think again, of these sad times, when the bloody sword of persecutors was drawn to keep off the people of God from coming near this tree, and then you will the better conceive of your present privilege: yea, look back unto those times of popish ignorance, when this cellar of cordial waters was locked up in the original tongues, and not one in a whole town to be found that had a key, by whom poor souls in their fainting fits and agonies of spirit, could have it opened, so as to come by any of their

their sweet consolations to restore their swooning souls; and then you will surely bless God, who hath given you so free an access unto them, when others cannot have access to you to communicate their help unto you.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Bless God for the ministry of the word, which is the public school he opens to his people, that in it they may learn the use of this their weapon.

It is a sad fruit that grows upon the little smattering knowledge that some have got from the word, to puff them up with a conceit of their own abilities, so as to despise the ministry of the word as a needless work. The Corinthians were sick of this disease, which the apostle labours to cure by a sharp reproof, *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us*, 1 Cor. iv. 18. Paul, it seems, was nobody now with these high proficients; the time was, when Paul came to town, he was a welcome man; the sucking child was not more glad to see his mother come home, nor could cry more earnestly to be laid to the breast, than they did to partake of his ministry; but now, like the child, when he had sucked his belly full, they bite the very teat they so greedily a while before took into their mouths, as if they should never want another meal. So high did the waxen wings of pride carry them above all thoughts of needing his ministry any more.

And hath not the pride of many in our days, carried them as far into a contempt of the ministry of the word, though their knowledge comes far short of the Corinthians knowledge? Well, take heed of this sin: Miriam's plague, yea, a worse, a spiritual scab and leprosy apparently cleaves to those, as close as a girdle to the loins, who come once to scorn and despise this ordinance, that may make all afraid to come near their tents. What prodigious errors are they left unto, whereby God brands them? Yea, what sensual lusts hath the once forward profession of many among them, been quite swallowed up with? If once a man thinks he needs no longer go to the spirit's school, he shall find, whoever he is, that he takes the ready way to deprive himself of the spirit's teaching at home: *Quench not the spirit, despise not prophesyings*, 1 Thes. v. 19, 20. They are coupled together: He that despiseth one, loseth both. If the scholar be too proud to learn of the usher, he is unworthy to be taught by the master.

But I turn to you, humble souls, who yet *sit at the feet of Jesus, in your right minds*: speak the truth, and lie not, are you not well paid for your pains? Dare you say of your waiting on the ministry of the word, what a wretch, though a learned one, Politianus by name, said of his reading the scripture, that *he never spent time to less purpose!* Do you count it among your lost time, and misplaced hours, that are bestowed in hearing the word? I trow not. Thou keepest thy acquaintance with the word at home, if thou beest a Christian, and eatest many a sweet bit in a corner while

while thou art secretly meditating thereon; but does this content thee, or make thee think the word preached a superfluous meal?

I am sure David knew how to improve his solitary hours as well as another; yet, in his banishment, O how he was pinched and hunger-bitten for want of the public ordinance! and sure we cannot think he forgot to carry his bible with him into the wilderness, loving the word so dearly as he did. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is*, Psal. lxiii. 1. Why David? What is the matter thou thus complainest? Hast thou not the word to read in secret? Canst thou not let down thy bucket, and by meditation draw what thou wilt out of the well of the word? Why then dost say, thou art *in a thirsty land, where no water is*? He means therefore comparatively: the sweetest refreshings he enjoyed in his private converse with the word, were not comparable to what he had met in public. And can you blame a sick child for desiring to sit with his brethren at his father's table, though he is not forgot in his chamber where he is a prisoner, but hath something sent him up? It was the sanctuary, there *to see God, his power, and glory, as of old*, that David's heart longed for, and could not well live without. God threatens to bring *a famine of hearing the word*, Amos viii. 11. Mark, not a famine of *reading* the word, but of *hearing* the word. If the word be not preached, though we have the bible to read in at home, yet it is a famine, and so we ought to judge it. *The word of the Lord was precious in those days, there was no open vision*, 1 Sam. iii. 1. The strongest Christians would find a want of this ordinance in time: We see in a town besieged, though it be well laid in with corn, yet when put to grind with private hand-mills all they spend, what straits they are soon put to. And so will the best grown saints, when they come to have no more from the word for their souls to live on, than what they grind with their own private meditation and labour, then they will miss the minister, and see it was mercy indeed to have one whose office it was to grind all the week for them.

And if the stronger Christian cannot spare this office, because yet not perfect, what shift shall the weaker sort make, who need the minister to divide the word, as much as little children their nurses help to mince their meat, and cut their bread for them? To leave them to their own improving the word, is to set a whole loaf among a company of little babes, and bid them help themselves: Alas, they will sooner cut their fingers with the knife, than fill their bellies with the bread.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Bless God for the efficacy of the word upon the soul.

Did ever its point prick thy heart? its edge fetch blood of thy lusts, and cut off any rotten member of the body of sin? bless God for

for it; you would do as much to a surgeon for lancing a sore, and severing a putrified part of thy body, though he put thee to exquisite torture in the doing of it. And I hope thou thinkest God hath done thee a greater kindness than so. Solomon tells us, *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful*, Prov. xxvii. 6. The wounds that God thus gives, are the faithful wounds of a friend; and the kisses sin gives, come from an enemy. God's wounds cure, sin's kisses kill.

The Italians say, *Play, wine, and women, consume a man laughing.* It is true of all pleasurable sins; and as sin kills the sinner laughing, so God saves poor souls weeping and bleeding under the wounds his word gives them. Happy soul, thou that hast made such an exchange to get out of the enchanting arms of thy lusts, that would have kissed thee to death, and to fall into the hands of a faithful God, that means thee no more hurt by all the blood he draws from thee, than the saving of thy soul's life! How far mightest thou have gone, and not met with such a friend, and such a favour! There is not another sword like this in all the world, that can cure with cutting; nor another arm could use this sword to have done thus much with it, besides the spirit of God; the ax does nothing till the hand of the workman lifts it up, neither can every one, may be none else, do with his tools what himself can. None could do such feats with Scanderbeg's sword as himself; to be sure none can pierce the conscience, wound the spirit, and hew down the lusts that there lie skulking in their fastness, but God himself; and this he doth not for every one that reads and hears it, which still greatens thy mercy. *There were many widows in Israel, when God sent his prophet to her of Zarepta.* And why to her? Was there never a drunkard, swearer, or unbeliever, beside thee in the congregation at the same time, that God armed his word to smite thee down, and graciously prick thy heart? O cry out in admiration of this distinguishing mercy, Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself to me, and not unto the world!

CHAP. XXI.

An Exhortation to the Study of the Word.

SECONDLY, Let this provoke you to the study of the word, that you may thereby have a familiar acquaintance with it. For this the Bereans obtained a mark of honour as a nobler

sort of people than others, because *they searched the scriptures*, Acts xvii. Shall God leave but one book to his church's care and study, and shall it not be read? Shall we be told there is so rich a treasure laid up in this mine, and we continue so beggarly in our knowledge, rather than take a little pains by digging in it to come by it? The canker and rust of our gold and silver, which is got with harder labour than is here required, will rise up in judgment against many, and say, You could drudge and trudge for us that are now turned to rust and dust, but could walk over the field of the word, where an incorruptible treasure lay, and would lose it rather than your sloth!

O where is it to be found, in what breast doth the ancient zeal of former saints to the word, lodge! Have they not counted it above rubies and precious stones! Have they not trudged over sea and land to get the sight of it! given the money out of their purse, the coat off their backs, to purchase a few leaves of it, and parted with their blood out of their veins, rather than forego the treasure which they found in it! And is the market now fallen so low, that thou desirest not acquaintance with it, when it is offered at a far lower rate! Either they must be charged for very fools to buy the knowledge of it so dear, or you that refuse it, who may have it so cheap.

But lest you should think I set you upon a needless work, you are to understand there is an indispensable necessity of scripture knowledge. And that is double: *Necessitas præcepti*, and *necessitas medii*.

First, There is a necessity of command, *Search the scriptures*, John v.

Indeed there were not such an express word for this duty, yet the very penning of them, with the end for which they are writ, considered, would impose the duty upon us. When a law is enacted by a prince or state, for their subjects to obey, the very promulgation of it is enough to oblige the people to take notice of it. Neither will it serve a subject's turn that breaks this law, to say he was ignorant of any such law being in force: the publication of it bound him to enquire after it. What other end have law-givers in divulging their acts, but that their people might know their duty? Christ fastens condemnation on the ignorance of men where means for knowledge is afforded. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness*, John iii. 19. They will not know the rule, because they have no mind to walk by it.

Now, if ignorance of the word be condemned where its light shines, then sure he commands us to open our eyes, whereby we may let in the knowledge it sheds forth; for a law must be transgressed, before a condemning sentence be pronounced. It is the heathen

heathen that shall be judged without the written word; but thou that livest within its sound, shalt be judged by it, whether thou wilt know it or not, 2 Thes. i. 8. And if thou shalt be judged by it, then surely thou art bound to be instructed by it: The Jews once had the word deposited in their hands, *Unto them were committed the oracles of God;* and do you think they had well discharged their trust, by locking them up safely in the ark, and never looking into them? Surely you cannot but think God intended another chest, even that in their own breasts, where he principally would have them bestowed. They were committed to them, and now to us, as a dying father doth his will and testament to his son whom he makes his executor, not to throw it aside among his waste papers, but carefully and curiously to read and observe it, that thereby nothing therein contained might be left unperformed.

It is called *the faith delivered unto the saints,* Jude iii. That is, delivered to their study and care. If any of us had lived when Christ was here in the flesh, and he (when taking his farewell of the world) should have left to us some one thing in special charge to be done for his sake after he was gone to heaven, would we not religiously have performed the will of our dying Saviour, as did St. John, to whom he left the care of his mother, who therefore took her home to his own house? Behold here a greater charge deposited in his saints hands; *The faith once delivered to them.* That is, once for all, to be by them kept and transmitted from one generation to another while this world lasts: So that if thou takest thyself to be one of the saints number, thou art concerned with the rest to take it home with thee, and see that it dwells in thee richly, as becomes such a guest bequeathed by so dear a friend.

Secondly, It is necessary, *necessitate medii.*

The word contains the whole counsel of God, for the bringing poor sinners to eternal life, and none besides this (only as they borrow their notions out of it). If you will search the scripture, and sit here at the feet of the spirit (who fits his scholars for heaven by this one book), where wilt thou meet another master? In whose works else wilt thou find the words of eternal life? Apollos (who was a man *mighty in the scriptures*), it is said, that Aquila and Priscilla *expounded to him the way of God more perfectly,* Acts xviii. 26. An exposition presupposeth a text.—The meaning is, they opened the scripture more perfectly to him.

This is the way of God, to lead us to God; yea, the only way: In other journies, we may miss the right way, and yet come at last to the place we intended, though not so soon; but no way will bring us to God, but this of the word; neither can we walk in this way of God, if we be ignorant of it. A man may in other

journies be in his right way, and though he knows not he is right, yet may come safe home: But we can have no benefit from this way of God, if wholly ignorant of it, because we can do nothing in faith. O labour therefore to study this book, though thou beest a dunce in all besides!

What is it thou wouldst learn? Is it the true knowledge of God? Thou mayest tumble over all the philosophers that ever writ, and when thou hast done, not be able to frame a right notion of him. The best of them all were but brutish in their highest knowledge of God. Indeed God left the wise world to run into a thousand follies and vanities, while they were by their own wisdom shaping a religion to themselves, that having proved them dunces, he might send them and the whole world to learn this lesson in another school, and that is the ministry of the gospel, which is nought else but the explication and application of the word; 1 Cor. i. 21. *After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.*

Wouldst thou come to the true knowledge of sin? This also is a notion to be found no where else; the scripture alone dissects the whole body of sin, and reads to us a perfect anatomy-lecture upon its most minute and secret parts: This discovers the ulcers of our wicked hearts which thousands die of, and through ignorance of the scriptures, can never come to know what their disease is. If lust comes not out in spots and sores, to be seen in the outward conversation, the philosopher pronounceth him a clear man. The plague of the heart, though an old disease and epidemical, yet never was found out, or treated of, but by this sacred book, and this it doth fully, yea, acquaints us where and from whom we got this infection: Even from Adam, by whom the world was tainted and turned into a pest-house. Which of the wise ones of the world ever dreamed of this genealogy? Poor man, till the scripture informs him of this, he lies in the pit of sin, and knows not who threw him in. In a word, Wouldst thou be helped out? Thou must then be beholden to the scripture to do this kind office for thee. Thy own cordage is too short to reach, and too weak to draw thee thence. If thou takest not hold of this cord of love which God lets down unto thee in his word, thy case is desperate.

And now, having set life and death before thee, I leave thee to thy choice. If yet thou beest resolved to reject the knowledge of the Almighty, and put thy soul to launch into eternity without this chart to direct thee, not caring whether thou sinkest or swimmest, at what port thou arrivest in the other world, heaven or hell; then prepare to take up thy lodgings among the damned, and harden thy stout heart, if thou canst, against those endless flames

flames which are kindled for all those that *know not God, and obey not his gospel*, 2 Thess. i. And to thy terror know, that in spite of thy now wilful ignorance, thou shalt one day understand the scriptures, to the increase of thy torment; here thou shuttest out their light, but then it will shine full on thy face, when it would give thee some ease if thou couldst forget that ever thou didst hear of such a book as the Bible is; but then, against thy will, thou shalt carry the remembrance thereof to hell with thee, that thy scornful neglect of it on earth may be continually pouring new horror, as so much fire and brimstone, into thy guilty conscience.

How must it needs then fill thee with amazement, to think of thy folly and madness, to sell thy soul for a little ease and sloth! *Hell from beneath will be moved for thee*, to meet thee at my coming thither: *It will stir up the dead for thee;* and the poor heathens, whom thou shalt find prisoners there, will come flocking about thee, and with their taunts reproaching thee, saying, *Art thou also become weak as we?* Art thou becoming like unto us? Thou perishest for thy ignorance, who hadst the key of knowledge at thy girdle, and at so easy a rate mightest have been instructed in the way of life. We poor heathens cannot bring an action against God for false imprisonment, though we never heard of such a thing as the gospel, for we did not walk up to our little light; and might have known more of God, had we not darkened our own foolish minds by rebelling against the light we had; but never were we at such cost to damn our souls as you, who have rejected the word of God, and broke through all the threatenings and promises thereof, to come hither!

CHAP. XXII.

Several carnal Shifts and Objections that some bring to excuse them from the Study of the Scriptures, removed.

Object. BUT you will say, If we had so much time to spare as others, we would not be so unacquainted with the scriptures; but alas, we have so much business to do, and our hands so full with our worldly callings, that we hope God will excuse us, though we have not so much knowledge of his word as others.

SECT. I.—*Answ.* Is this thy plea that thou indeed meanest to use when thou comest to the bar, and art called to give thy answer to Christ thy judge upon this matter? Does not thy

heart quake within thy breast, to think how he will knit his brow, and throw this thy apology with disdain and wrath upon thy face? Did so much anger sit on the countenance of meek Jesus when on earth, and such a dreadful doom proceed from his sweet lips against those that made their farms and oxen as a mannerly excuse for not coming to his supper, sentencing them never to taste thereof?

O what then will glorious Christ say (when mounted on his tribunal, not to invite, but to judge sinners) to such an excuse as this! Could God find heart and time to pen and send this love-letter to thee, and thou find none to read and peruse it! The sick man no time to look on his physician's bill! The condemned malefactor to look on his prince's letter of grace, wherein his pardon is tendered to him! Poor wretch, must the world have all thy time, and swallow thee up quick! A curse not less than that of Corah. Art thou such a slave to thy pelf, as to tie thy soul to thy purse-strings; and take no more time for the saving of thy soul, than this cruel master will afford thee! Thou and thy money perish with thee! His soul is in an ill case which hath its allowance from so base a lust: this is so far from mending the matter, that thou dost but cover one sin with another.

Who gave thee leave thus to overlade thyself with the incumbrance of the world? Is not God the Lord of thy time? Is it not given by him, to be laid out for him? He allows thee indeed a fair portion thereof for the lower employments of this life; but did he ever intend to turn himself out of all? This is as if the mariners, who are allowed by the merchant some small adventure for themselves, should fill the ship, and leave no stowage for his goods that pays the freight: will it suffice him to say, There is no room left for his commodities? Or as if a servant, when his master asks why he neglected such a business committed to his care for dispatch, should answer, he was drunk, and therefore could not do it.

Why did you not read my word, and meditate thereon? will Christ say at that day. Darest thou then be so impudent as to say, Lord, I was overcharged with the cares, and drunk with the love of the world, and therefore I could not! Well, if this be the thief that robs thee of thy time, get out of his hands as soon as thou canst, lest it also rob thee of thy soul: the devil can desire no greater advantage against thee; he hath thee sure enough in his trap; he may better boast over thee, than Pharaoh could over Israel, *He is entangled, he is entangled, in the wilderness of the world, and shall not escape my hands.*

If a friend should tell you, that you kept so many servants and retainers as would beggar you, would you not listen to his counsel, and rather turn them out of doors, than keep them still to eat you out of them? And wilt thou not be as careful of thy soul? Wilt

thou

thou keep such a rout of worldly occasions, as will eat up all thoughts of God and heaven? Certainly thou must either discharge thyself of these, or else fairly dismiss thy hope of salvation. But why should I speak so much to these? This ordinarily is but a cover to men's sloth: if they had hearts, they would find time to converse with the word in the greatest throng of their worldly occasions: these can find time to eat, and sleep, to sport and recreate themselves, but no time for God and his word: would they but allow their souls those broken ends of time to search the scripture, which they spend in pastimes, idle visits, reading of empty pamphlets, it would not be long but they might give a happy account of their proficiency in their spiritual knowledge. What calling more incumbering than a soldier's? and of all soldiers the general's, to whom all resort? Such a one was Joshua, yet a strict command given him to study the scripture, Josh. i. 8. *This book shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.* Must Joshua, in the midst of drums and trumpets, and distractions of war, find time to meditate on the law of God? and shall thy shop or plough, a few trivial occasions in thy private calling, discharge thee from the same duty? Dost thou think that the closet is such an enemy to thy shop? and the time spent with God, a thief to thy temporal estate? God, I am sure, intends his people better; as appears in the former place, *Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

SECT. II.—*Object.* 2. But I cannot read, how can I search the scriptures?

Ans. It is sad, I confess, that parents, who are God's trustees, to whom the nurture of their children is committed, should take no more care for their souls, than the ostrich doth of her eggs, not caring what becomes of them. What do these but throw them into the devil's mouth, by sending them out into a sinful world, without the knowledge of God and his word, to become a prey to every lust that meets them! To hell they must needs swim, if God shews no more pity to them than their bloody parents have done!

But shall thy parents negligence be a plea for thy ignorance? Wilt not thou be merciful to thyself, because they were cruel? in the fear of God be persuaded to supply their defect by thy diligence. I hope thou dost not think it a shame to learn that now thou art old, which thou shouldst have been taught when thou wert young. Had not thy parents learned thee a trade to get thy temporal living, wouldst thou therefore have lived a beggar, rather than have applied thyself, though late, to some calling? There are many, for thy encouragement, who have begun late, and by God's blessing on their diligence, have conquered the difficulty of

the work. If thou wert in prison, thou hadst rather learn to read thy neck verse, than lose thy life for want thereof.

Now, though ability to read the word be not of absolute necessity for the salvation of thy soul, yet knowledge of its saving truth is, and few better private means to obtain this than reading; but if thou beest not capable of this, thou hast not by it an excuse for thy ignorance, so long as thou hast an ear to receive instruction from others. As God sometimes recompences the defect of one sense with the quickness of another, so may be thou shalt find thy inability to read supplied with a tenacious memory, to hold what thou hearest read or preached unto thee; some martyrs we find mighty in the scriptures, able to defend the truth against learned doctors, and yet not book-learned: One amongst the rest, who could not read, *yet carried always some part of the scripture about him, and when he met any Christian that could, he would get him to read some portion or other thereof unto him*, whereby he attained to such a measure of knowledge and faith, as made him wiser than his enemies, and a stout champion for the truth, even to resist to blood.

SECT. III.—*Object.* 3. O but, saith a third, Though I can read, yet I am of so weak an understanding, that I fear I shall make no work with such deep mysteries, as are there contained.

Answ. Take heed this objection comes not from thy sluggish heart, which gets this fair pretence to ease thee of a duty thou fearest will be troublesome unto thee. Didst thou ever make a trial, and set about the work, conscientiously using all means that might conduce towards thy instruction in the mind of God? If not, lay not the blame on thy weak head, but wicked heart.—When thou wentest first to be an apprentice, what skill hadst thou in thy trade? Didst thou therefore despair and run away? No, but by thy diligence didst learn the mystery of it in a few years, so as to maintain thyself comfortably upon it; and will not thy industry to learn that, condemn thy sloth in not studying the word, which is able to bring in a better livelihood to thy soul, than thy trade can do for thy body?

But, poor soul, if what thou sayest indeed ariseth from the deep sense thou hast of thy own weakness, then ponder upon this twofold encouragement.

First, God is able to interpret his own word unto thee.

Indeed none can enter into the knowledge thereof, but he must be beholden to his spirit to unlock the door. If thou hadst a riper head and higher parts than thou canst now pretend to, thou wouldst without his help be but like the blind Sodomites about Lot's house, groping, but not able to find the way into the true saving knowledge thereof. He that hath not the right key, is as far from entering the house as he that hath none, yea, in some

sense,

sense, further off; for he that hath none, will call to him that is within; while the other, trusting to his false key, stands pottering without to little purpose. The Pharisees, who were so conversant in the scriptures, and obtained the name for the admired doctors of the chair, called, 2 Cor. ii. 8. *The princes of the world,* because so renowned and adored among the people; yet even these missed that truth which lay before them almost in every leaf of Moses and the prophets, whom they were, in their every-day's study, tumbling over: I mean that grand truth concerning Christ, of whom both Moses and the prophets speak. And at the same time the people whom they counted so base, yea, accursed, as those that understood not the law, could see him whom they missed.

None so knowing, that God cannot blind and infatuate; none so blindly ignorant, whose eyes his spirit cannot open. He who by his incubation upon the waters, at the creation, hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul, and enlighten it, though now it be as void of knowledge, as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The schoolmaster sometimes sends home the child, and bids his father put him to another trade, because not able with all his art to make a scholar of him: but if the spirit of God be the master, thou shalt learn, though a very dunce, Psal. cxix. 130. *The entrance of thy word giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple.*

No sooner is a soul entered into the spirit's school, but he becomes a proficient: thence we are commanded to encourage those that discourage themselves, Isa. xxxv. 3. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.* Why? what good news shall we tell them? *The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped;* ver. 5. *An highway shall be there, and shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

Secondly, The deeper sense thou hast of thy own weakness, the more fit thou art for the spirit's teaching.

A proud scholar and an humble master, will never agree; Christ is humble, and lowly, and so *resists the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* Though he cannot brook him that is proud, yet he can bear with thee that art weak and dull, if humble and diligent! as we see in the disciples, whom our Saviour did not disdain to teach the same lesson over and over again, till at last they say, *Lo, now speakest thou plainly,* John xvi. 29.—The eunuch was no great clerk, when in his chariot he was reading

reading Isaiah's prophecy, yet because he did it with an honest heart, Philip is dispatched to instruct him.

CHAP. XVII.

Containeth four Directions to the Christian in the Use of this Sword, for his Defence against the first Enemy fore-mentioned, viz. the Persecutor.

Quest. BUT haply some may say, You have said enough to let us know how necessary a weapon this sword is to defend our souls, and of what admirable use in all the conflicts that the Christian hath with any of his enemies. But we hope you will not leave us thus; it is a word of counsel we now listen to hear from you, how we, poor Christians, may wield and use this sword for our own defence, and the vanquishing of the several enemies whose approach you have alarmed us to expect; some whereof we already, to our great terror, see in the field against us, and how soon the other may appear, we know not. What will a sword by our side, a Bible in our hand, yea, mouth, do us good, if we be not instructed how we may ward off their blows, and make them feel the impression of ours therewith?

Answ. Your question is reasonable; and for your better satisfaction, I shall sort the direction to the several kinds of enemies you have to grapple with; for their assaults being of a different nature, do require a resistance suitable to their way of fight.

SECT. I.—We shall begin with the *persecutor*.

Now, wouldst thou, Christian, stand the shock of his furious assault, when he hangs out his bloody flag, breathing slaughter to the church and flock of Christ, if they will not let him trample upon all their glory, by defiling their consciences, and renouncing the faith at the lust of his imperious command? Then,

First, Let it be thy first care to get scripture-grounds for those principles and practices of thine, which stir up the persecutor's rage against thee.

A man had need be well assured of that which brings his life and dear enjoyments (that go all away with it), into hazard.—It is enough to weaken the courage of a valiant man, to fight in a mist, when he cannot well discern his foes from his friends: And to be a damp upon the Christian's spirit, in a suffering hour, if he be not clear in his judgment, and fixed in his principles that he is to suffer for; look, therefore, to put that out of question in in thy own thoughts, for which the persecutor calls thee into question.

question. And the rather, because it ever was, and still will be the policy of persecutors, to disfigure what they can the beautiful face of those truths and practices for which the servants of Christ suffer, that they may put a colour of justice upon their bloody cruelties, and make the world believe they suffer as evil doers.

Now thou wilt never be able to bear up under the weight of this their heavy charge, except thou beest fully persuaded in thy own conscience, that thou sufferest for righteousness sake. But if thou standest clear in thy own thoughts concerning thy cause, thou wilt easily wipe off the dirt they throw upon thee, and sweetly entertain thyself with the comfort which thy own conscience will bring to thee through the reproaches of thy enemies. *Nemo est miser sensu alieno,* saith Salvian, what others say or think of us makes not miserable: One reproof from a man's own thoughts, wounds more than the reproaches do of all the world besides.—When the Thessalonians were once satisfied of the certain truth of Paul's doctrine, *For the gospel,* it is said, *came to them in much assurance,* 1 Thes. i. 5. then they could open their door with joy to receive it, though affliction and persecutions come along with it, ver. 6.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Improve those scriptures which teach us to dread God more, and fear man less.

Every man is most loath to fall into his hands whom he fears most: So that if God hath once gained the supremacy of thy fear, thou wilt rather skip into the hottest fire the persecutor can make, than make God thy enemy: *Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,* Psal. cxix. 161. David had put, it seems, man's wrath, and that which God threatens in his word, into the scales, and finding God's hand to be without compare the heavier, trembles at that, and ventures the worst that the other can do against him.

Hence it is the scripture is so much in depressing the power of man, that we may not be scared at his big looks or threats, in depressing the power of man, and representing his utmost rage to be so contemptible and inconsiderable a thing, as none that knows who God is, needs fear the worst he can do. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isa. ii. 22. *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell,* Mat. x. 28. *Pueri timent larvas, sed non timent ignem,* children are afraid of bugbears, that cannot hurt them, but can play with fire that will burn them; and no less childish is it to be frightened into a sin at the frowns of a sorry man, who comes forth with a vizard of seeming dread and terror, but hath no power to hurt us more than our own fear gives him,

him, and to play with hell-fire into which God is able to cast us for ever. Truly, this is to be scared with painted fire in the picture, and not in the furnace where it really burns. What was John Hus the worse for his fool's cap that his enemies put on his head, so long as under it he had a helmet of hope which they could not take off? Or how much nearer hell was the same blessed martyr for their committing his soul to the devil? No nearer than some of their own wicked crew were to heaven, for being sainted in the pope's calendar. Melanchton said, some are *Anathema secundum dici,* as Luther, and other faithful servants of Christ, whom the pope cursed. But what saith David? *Let them curse, but bless thou,* Psal. cix. 28. He that hath God's good word, needs not fear the world's bad. The dogs barking doth not make the moon change her colour: nor needs the saint change his countenance for the rage of his persecutors.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Be sure thou givest up thy lust to the sword of the spirit, before thy life is in any danger from the sword of the persecutor.

He is not likely to be free of his flesh for Christ, when called to suffer at man's hand, that is dainty of his lusts, and cannot bear the edge of the spirit's sword, when he comes to mortify them.—Canst thou be willing to lay down thy life for Christ, and yet keep an enemy in thy bosom out of the hand of justice, that seeks to take away the life of Christ? Persecutors tempt, as well as torture, Heb. xi. They promise the honours of the court, as well as threaten the hardship of the prison, and cruelty of the devouring fire. Now if thy love to the world would be mortified, it is easy to tell what choice thou wilt make, even the same that Demas did, thou wilt embrace the present world, and leave Christ in the plain field.

Or if thou shouldst, through a natural stoutness, bear up under sufferings, even to give thy body to be burnt, rather than renounce the true religion thou professest, yet if any lust should at last be found to have been fostered by thee, thou shalt have no more thanks at Christ's hands, than he who in the law offered up an unclean beast to God. It is possible for one to die in the cause of Christ, and not be his martyr. The heart must be holy thou sufferest with, as well as the cause holy thou sufferest for. Thy behaviour must be gracious in suffering, as well as the cause just that brings thee to suffer. He alone is Christ's martyr, that suffers for Christ, as Christ himself suffered: For he hath not only left us his truth to maintain to blood, when called thereunto, but his example to follow also in our sufferings, 1 Pet. ii. 21. *If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently: this is acceptable with God, for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his*

his steps; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, &c.

This is hard work indeed, in the very fire to keep the spirit cool, and clear of wrath and revenge, towards those that throw him so unmercifully into the devouring flames! but it makes him, that by grace from above can do it, a glorious conqueror. Flesh and blood would bid a man call for fire from heaven, rather than mercy to fall upon them that so cruelly handle them. He that can forgive his enemy is too hard for him, and hath the better of him. Because his enemy's blows do but bruise his flesh, but the wounds that love gives, pierce the soul and conscience. Saul was forced to confess that David, persecuted so furiously by him, was the better man, *Thou art more righteous than I*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. And the people went from the execution of Christ, whom they were so mad to have crucified, sick of what they had done, shaking their heads, as if all were not right they had done against so good a man, Luke xxiii. Now when two contraries are in a contest, that overcomes which preserves its own nature, and turns the other into some likeness unto itself; as we see fire transfuseth its own heat into the water, forcing it to assimilate and yield to it.

Thus a holy charitable spirit, by forgiving an enemy, if it doth not prevail to turn his enemy's heart to him in love, yet then it turns his enemy's conscience against himself, and forceth him to condemn himself, and justify him whom he persecutes wrongfully.

SECT. IV.—Fortify thy faith on those promises which have an especial respect to such a condition.

This is the saints victory over the world, even their faith.—Thus David, when Saul seemed to have him under his foot, and had driven him from living in a court, to earth himself for his safety in a cave of the wilderness, yet by faith triumphed over his proud enemy, and sung as pleasantly in his grot and earth hole, as the merriest bird in the wood. *My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise*, Psal. lvi. Saul had his body higher fed, but not his heart fixed as David's was; and therefore could not sing to David's tune. A thousand thoughts and fears distracted his head and heart, while David lives without fear and care, even when his enemies are in the field a hunting for his life. Faith on the promise will, like the widow's oil, not only set thee out of debt to all worldly fears and cares, which by thy troubles thou mayest contract, but afford thee enough to live comfortably besides, yea with joy unspeakable and glorious.

There are two sorts of sorrows that do so usually distress gracious souls most in their sufferings for Christ.

1. First, they are prone to be troubled for their own persons and private affairs.

2. For

2. For the cause of Christ which they bear testimony unto, lest that should miscarry.

Now there is abundant provision laid up in the promises to ease the Christian's heart of both these burdens.

First, Acquaint thyself with those promises that concern thyself as a sufferer for Christ, and see where any crevice is left unstopped, if thou canst, that may let in the least air of suspicion in thy mind to disturb thy peace, and discompose thy joy.

The promises are so many, and fitted so exactly to every particular query of which the soul can desire satisfaction, that it will require thy study and diligence to gather them. God having chose rather to scatter his promises here and there promiscuously, than to sort them, and set every kind in a distinct knot by themselves. We may think, on purpose, that we might be drawn into an acquaintance with the whole scripture, and not leave any one corner unsearched, but curiously observe it from one end to the other. And let not the present peace of the church, cause thee o think it needless work.

The apothecary gathers his simples in summer, which haply he may not use till winter: And how soon persecution may arise, thou knowest not: The church hath ever had, and shall have its vicissitudes of summer and winter; yea, sometimes winter strikes in before it is looked for, and then who is the man most likely to be offended? Surely, he that received the word with joy in the prosperous estate of the church, but laid not in for foul weather. Well, what is thy fear? whence comes thy discouragement? art thou scared with the noisomeness of the prison? or doth the terror of the fire, and torture of the rack, affright thee? know for thy comfort, if thy strength be too weak to carry thee through them, thou shalt never be called to such hot service, and hard work. The promise assures thee as much, *He will not suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able,* 1 Cor. x. 12. God, who gives the husbandman his discretion with what instrument to thresh his corn, as it is harder or softer, will not let the persecutor's wheel come upon thee that art not able to bear it.

God gives this very account why he led his people the further way about (at their first coming out of Egypt) rather than by the land of the Philistines (the far shorter cut of the two) Exod. xiii. 17. *For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and return to Egypt.* See here, God considers their weakness, they cannot yet bear war, and therefore they shall not be tried with it, till more hardened for it. But if thou beest called into the field to encounter with these bloody fiery trials, the promise takes the whole care and charge of the war off thy hands; *When they deliver you up, take no thought* (that is disquieting, distrustful) *how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in*

in that same hour what ye shall speak, Mat. x. 17. and ver. 20. *It is the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* There is no mouth that God cannot make eloquent: no back so weak, which he cannot make strong. And he hath promised to be with thee wherever thy enemies carry thee; fire and water shall not part thee from his sweet company.

These promises make so soft a pillow for the saints heads, that they have profest, many of them, never to have lain at more ease than when most cruelly handled by their merciless enemies. One dates his letter *from the delectable orchard his prison*, another subscribes herself, *Your loving friend, as merry as one bound for heaven.* They have been so far from pitying themselves in their sufferings, that their chief sorrow hath been, that they could be no more thankful for them. And whence had they their strength? Where drew they their joy? Had they not both from the spirit, applying the promises to them?

Secondly, As for the trouble thou puttest thyself to concerning the cause and church of Christ, which thou mayest see at any time distressed by the enemy, though God takes thy good will to them (from which those thy fears arise) very kindly, yet there is no need of tormenting thyself with that which is sure never to come to pass.

The ark may shake, but it cannot fall: the ship of the church may be tossed, but it cannot sink, for Christ is in it, and will awake time enough to prevent its wreck: there is therefore no cause for us, when the storm beateth hardest upon it, to disturb him, as once the disciples did, with the shrieks and outcries of our unbelief, as if all were lost. Our faith is more in danger of sinking at such a time, than the cause and church of Christ are.—They are both by the promise set out of the reach of men and devils. The gospel is an *everlasting gospel*, Rev. xiv. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot of this shall perish*, Mat. v. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. and shall be alive to walk over all its enemies graves, yea to see the funeral of the whole world, when at the great day of the Lord, it must be everlastingly buried in its own ruins.

And for the church, that is built upon a rock impregnable, *The gates of hell shall never prevail against it*, Mat. xvi. It hath been often in the sea, but never drowned; seldom out of the fire, but never consumed; sometimes swallowed up to reason, but, like Jonah in the whale's belly, cast up again, as too heavy a charge for the strongest stomach that ever persecutor had to digest.—The faith of this hath carried the blessed martyrs to the grave, when they swam to it in their own blood with joy, because they knew the church should have the day at last, and that they left others behind in pursuit of the victory on earth, while themselves were

were taken out of the field, to triumph in heaven: yea, some, by prophetic spirit, have foretold the very time when the persecuted truths, that were then buried with so much ignominy and scorn, should have a happy resurrection and victory over their proud enemies.

Thus John Hus cited his enemies to answer him a hundred years after, comforting himself, that though they then *burnt the Goose* (alluding to his own name) a *Swan* would come in his stead, that should fill the air with his sweet singing, which was fulfilled in Luther, whose doctrine went far and near, and charmed the hearts of multitudes every where. And Hiltenius, another German divine, alleviated the miseries he endured in his stinking prison (where he died for rubbing the monks sores too hard) with this, that another, naming the very time, 1516, should rise after him that would ruin the monks kingdom (whose abuses he had but gently reproved) and that they should not be able to resist his power, nor so much as fasten a chain upon him; which came to pass in Luther; for, to a miracle, he was kept out of the hands of his bloody enemies, tho' never man's blood more thirsted for.

CHAP. XXIV.

Directions to the Christian, how to make use of the Sword of the Word, for his Defence against Errors and Seducers.

SECONDLY, The second enemy that comes forth against the Christian, is the heretic or seducer, who is so much more to be feared than the former, by how much it is worse to part with God's truth, than our own life; to be corrupted in our minds, than to be tortured in our members: in a word, to have our souls damned by God, than our bodies killed by man. If the martyrs had feared death more than heresy, they would not have leaped into the persecutor's flames, rather than consent unto their doctrine.

Now that thou mayest be able to lift up this sword of the spirit (the only weapon to defend thee) with victory against this dangerous enemy; apply thyself in the use of the best means, with thy utmost care, to find out the true sense and meaning of the spirit in his word. This sword in another's hand, will not defend thee: no, it must be in thy own, or else thou canst not have the benefit of it. The phrase and outward expression are but the shell, the sense and meaning is the pearl, which thou, like a wise merchant, shouldst seek for. To tumble over a chapter, and not

to

to reach the mind of God therein held forth, and to mumble over a prayer in an unknown tongue, are both alike. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches,* Rev. ii. 7. We are to listen what the spirit saith in the word as we hear or read it. And he that hath an ear for the spirit, will not have an ear for the seducer.

Now to help thee in thy search after the sense and meaning of the word, these directions I hope may stand thee in some stead.

SECT. I.—First, Take heed thou comest not to the scriptures with an unholy heart.

If ever you know the mind of God in his word, the spirit must impart it to you. And will he that is so holy, take thee by thy foul hand, thinkest thou, to lead thee into truth? No, thy doom is set, Dan. xii. *The wicked shall not understand.* The angel, who took Lot's daughters into the house, smote the Sodomites with blindness, that they might grope for the door, but not find it. And so are those like to be served, that come with unclean hearts to the word. *Without are dogs.* Not only without heaven at last, but without the true knowledge of God on earth. The wicked have the word of God, but the holy soul hath *the mind of Christ,* 1 Cor. ii. 16.

Therefore the same apostle exhorts us that we *be not conformed to this present world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable, and perfect will of God,* Rom. xii. 2. And what amounts this to, but if we will have truth for our guest, and be acquainted with the mind and will of God, we must prepare a holy heart for its lodging? They commonly are taken captives by seducers, who were before prisoners to their lusts, 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7. *And lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.* When David would beg understanding in the word, he makes his purpose for a holy life, the argument with which he urgeth God. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart,* Psal. cxix. 33, 34.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Make not thy own reason the rule by which thou measurest scripture-truths.

Is that fit to try the revelations of the word by, which is dunced and puzzled with so many secrets in nature? Doth not the word reveal such things to us, as are not only above sense, *for eye hath not seen them, nor ear heard them;* but also above the ken of reason? being such as *never entered into the heart of man,* 1 Cor. ii. 9. Indeed the whole system of gospel-truths speaks in a foreign and outlandish tongue to reason: it can make no sense of them, except faith be the interpreter. The scriptures are like the Red Sea, through which the Israelites by faith passed safely,

but the Egyptians attempting to do it, for want of that guide, were drowned. A humble believer passeth through the deep mysteries of the word safely, without plunging into any dangerous mistakes; whereas those sons of pride, who leave faith, and take reason for their guide, we see how they are drowned in many damnable errors, Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, and what not?

The most dangerous errors fathered upon the scriptures, have sprung from this womb. This was the Sadducees' ground on which they went, for their denying the resurrection of the dead. They owned the book of Moses for the word of God, and yet denied the resurrection asserted therein, because it seemed so impossible a thing to their reason, that our bodies, after so many alterations into slime and dust, should stand up in life: this their reason laughed at; for so our Saviour's answer plainly shews, Mat. xxii. 29. *Ye err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*

SECT. III.—Thirdly, When thou consultest with the word, take heed thou comest not with a judgment pre-engaged to any party and opinion.

He is not like to hold the scales even, whose judgment is bribed before-hand. A distempered eye sees the object of that colour with which itself is affected; and a mind prepossessed, will be ready to impose its own sense upon the word, and so loseth the truth by an over-weening conceit of its own opinion. Too many, alas, read the scriptures not so much to be informed by them, as confirmed in what already they have taken up! they choose opinions, as Samson his wife, because they please them, and then come to gain the scripture's consent.

Thus the Jews first made up the match with their idols, and then ask counsel of God what they should do, Ezek. xiv. 5. It is a just judgment of God, that such should not see truth when it lies fair before them, but be given up to an injudicious heart, to believe the word favours their fancies, and chimes as they think, ver. 4, 5. *I the Lord will answer him according to the multitude of his idols: that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart.* And when is a man taken in his own heart, if not when ensnared in the fancies and follies which his erroneous mind hath weaved?

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, Go to God by prayer, for a key to unlock the mysteries of his word.

It is not the plodding, but the praying soul that will get this treasure of scripture-knowledge. Saint John got the *sealed book opened by weeping*, Rev. v. 5. God often brings a truth to the Christian's hand as a return of prayer, which he had long hunted for in vain with much labour and study; *There is a God in heaven*

ven that revealeth secrets, Dan. ii. 22. And where doth he reveal the secrets of his word, but at the throne of grace? From the *first day* (saith the angel) *that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words*, i. e. for thy prayer, Dan. x. 12. And what was this heavenly messenger's errand to Daniel, but to open more fully the scripture to him? as appears by *ver.* 14. compared with *ver.* 21. This holy man had got some knowledge by his study in the word, and this sets him a praying, and prayer fetched an angel from heaven to give him more light.

If ever we know the mind of God, we must be beholden to the spirit of God for it; *When the spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth*, John xvi. And the spirit is the fruit of Christ's intercession; *I will pray the Father, and he will send the Comforter*, &c. Now there must be a concurrence of our prayers with his intercession. While our high-priest is offering incense within the vail, we are to be praying without, for the same that he is interceding for within.

Now to quicken thee up to pray with more fervent importunity for this manuduction of the holy spirit to lead thee into truth,

First, Let the dread of those scriptures which set forth the danger of errors and false doctrines, fall upon thee, that thou mayest not think thou goest upon a slighty errand, when praying to be preserved from them, as if the odds were not great, whether thou hast thy request, or hast it not.

It is one of the devil's master-policies, by sinking the price of errors in the thoughts of men, to make them thereby the more vendible. Many think they shall not pay so dear for an error in judgment, as for a sin practice: Yea, some have such a latitude, that they fancy a man may be saved in any religion. A principle that must needs tend to make them who hold it, careless and incurious in their choice. That sin shall not want customers, which men think they shall pay little or nothing for. Some can be content to be drunk on free cost, that would not, were they assured their own purse should pay soundly for the reckoning.

How comes fornication to abound so much among the Romish Clergy, but because it is counted so petty a sin by them? And I wish that error and heresy (which are the fornication of the mind) were not by many among ourselves sized as low. But woe be to those clerks of the devil's market, that tempt and toll men on to sin by setting cheaper rates on their head, than the word of God hath done. If once the dread of sin be worn off the conscience, no wonder then if we see men as boldly leap upon it, as the frogs in the fable on the log, that lay so tame and still at the bottom of the river. Fear makes the body more apt to take infection, but it preserveth the soul from the infection of sin.

Now that thou mayest the more stand in fear of drinking in the poison of any corrupt and unsound doctrine, let thy mind ponder on a few scriptures, which shew both the detestable, and also the damning nature of them, Gal. v. 19. There heresy is called *a work of the flesh*, and reckoned among those sins which shut the doers of them out of heaven; *They which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, ver. 21. They are called doctrines of devils, 1 Tim. iii. 1. And if they come from the devil, whither must they lead but to hell? Such as are against the fundamental principles of the gospel, are inconsistent with the love and favour of God, 2 Epistle of John, *He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.* And who think you shall have him that hath not God?

Were there no other scripture to be produced against this kind of sin, but that one, 2 Pet. ii. 2. it were enough to strike the heretic through his loins, and make the knees of every seducer, like Belshazzar's at the sight of the *hand-writing on the wall*, to knock one against the other; *There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.* So that if a man hath a mind to get the start of other sinners, and desires to be in hell before them, he need do no more, but open his sails to the wind of heretical doctrine, and he is like to make a short voyage to hell of it, for these bring upon their maintainers swift destruction. Nay, the Spirit of God, the more to aggravate their deplored state, brings in three most dreadful instances of divine vengeance that ever was executed upon any sinners, viz.

The detrusion of the apostate angels from heaven to hell, the drowning of the old world, and the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah, by raining hell, as it were, out of heaven upon them, I say, he brings these as patterns and pledges of that vengeance which shall certainly befal this kind of sinners. And by this time I hope thou wilt be warm in thy prayer against this dangerous enemy. But,

Secondly, When thou hast thus possessed thy heart with the dread of being led into any corrupt opinion, then strengthen thy faith from those comfortable scriptures which assure thee, that no sincere saint shall be left to fall finally into any soul-damning error.

Christ is as able for, and faithful in, his prophetic and kingly offices, as his priestly. Surely he will not have the least care of his people's understanding, which is guide to their whole man, and is that faculty which he first practiseth upon in the work of conversion. Thou hast therefore as strong ground to believe he will preserve thee from damnable principles, as damnable practices.

tices. It would be little advantage to be kept from one enemy, and left open to the will and power of another. Christ's hedge comes round about his people. Solomon tells us, *The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit; he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein.* And so is the mouth of the seducer who comes with strange doctrines, whorish opinions.

Now who is this pit digged for? Indeed if we look at satan's design, it is a trap chiefly laid to catch the saint; he would, *if possible, deceive the very elect.* His greatest ambition is to spread his banners in this temple of God, and defile them whom God hath washed. But if we eye God's intention, it is a pit he suffers to be made for hypocrites and false gospellers, such who never would heartily close with Christ and his truth; these are they whom God abhors, and therefore left by him to become a prey to those that go a-birding for souls with their corrupt doctrines; 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11. *Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* These, like the out-setting deer, are shot, while they within the pale are safe; or like the suburbs taken by the enemy, but those within the city escape their fury. *It is the outward court,* Rev. xi. 2. *that is left to be trampled under foot.*

And in the fore-quoted place of the epistle to the Thessalonians, though he gives up hypocrites to be deceived by false teachers, as once Ahab by those Knights of the Post, his *false prophets,* yet ver. 13. he speaks comfortably to the elect, and shews, that the same degree which appointed them to salvation, provided also for their embracing the truth, as the necessary means leading thereunto; *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.* And if God hath got possession of the head by his truth, and of the heart by his sanctifying grace, he will keep them out of satan's clutches. Go, therefore, and plead the promise for thy preservation: the promise improved by faith at the throne of grace, will be thy best antidote in these times of general infection. Never fear speeding, when the promise bids thee go and prosper. The mercy is granted before thou askest it; only God will have thee by prayer lay thy claim to it, before thou beest possessed of it. And for thy help I have set down some sweet promises of this nature, with which, if thou acquaintest thyself, thou mayest be furnished both with grounds for thy faith, and arguments for thy prayer in this case, Mat. xxiv.

24. John vii. 12. John x. 5. 29. 1 Cor. xi. 19. Phil. iii. 15. 1 John ii. 19, 20.

SECT. V.—Fifthly, Compare scripture with scripture.

False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves. Their name may be called *Legion, for they are many.* But truth is one, it is homogeneal: one scripture sweetly harmonizeth with another. Hence it is, though there were many penmen of sacred writ, and those of several ages, one after another, yet they are all said to have but one mouth, Luke i. 70. *As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.* All had one mouth, because they accord so perfectly together.

The best way, therefore, to know the mind of God in one text, is to lay it to another. The lapidary useth one diamond to cut another, so should we one place of scripture to interpret another. Scriptures compared, like glasses set one against another, cast a light each to other; Nehem. viii. 8. *They* (i. e. the Levites) *read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. Et exponendo sensum dabant intelligentiam per scripturam ipsam.* So Tremellius reads the words, they gave them the meaning of what they read by the scripture itself.

Now in comparing scripture with scripture, be careful thou interpretest obscure places by the more plain and clear, and not the clear by the dark. Errors creep into the most shady obscure places, and there take sanctuary. *Some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned wrest.* No wonder they should stumble in those dark and difficult places, when they turn their back on that light which plainer scriptures afford to lead them safely through; *He that is born of God, sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,* 1 John v. 18. This is a dark place, which some run away with, and from it conclude there is a perfect state, free from all sin, attainable in this life: whereas a multitude of plain scriptures testify against such a conclusion, 1 Kings viii. 38. Prov. xx. 9. Eccles. vii. 20. Job ix. 20. Phil. iii. 12. 1 John i. 8, 9, 10, with many more.—So that it must be in a limited and qualified sense, That *he that is born of God sins not:* he sins not finally, or comparatively, not as the carnal wretch doth: *And the wicked one toucheth him not;* i. e. *Non tactu qualitativo,* as Cajetan saith. Not so as to transfuse his own nature and disposition into him, as the fire toucheth the iron or wood it comes near, assimilating them to its own nature.

This rule of using plain scripture to be a key to unlock the obscure, will hold in all other instances. And blessed be God, though to tame our pride he hath inserted some knotty passages, yet

yet the necessary saving truths are of easy access even to the weakest understanding. *Salubriter Spiritus Sanctus ita Scripturas Sanctas modificavit, ut locis apertioribus fami occurreret, obscurioribus fastidia detergeret,* Aug. de Doc. Ch. lib. 2. c. 6. There is enough in the plain places of scripture to keep the weak from starving, and in the obscure to lift them above contempt of the strongest.

SECT. VI.—Sixthly, Consult with thy faithful guides which God hath set over thee in his church.

Though people are not to pin their faith on the minister's sleeve, yet they are *to seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*, Mal. ii. 7. Christ directs his kids, for their safety, that they turn not aside into by-paths of error, and fall not into the hands of false teachers (those cheating companions) that *they go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed beside the shepherds tents*, Cant. i. 8. The devil knows too well, send away the shepherd, and he may soon catch the sheep. And these times prove sadly, that he is not mistaken. When were people's affections more withdrawn from their ministers? And when were their judgments more poisoned with error? Of what sort, I pray, are those, that have been trepanned into dangerous errors in our late unhappy times? Have they not most this brand upon them? Are they not such who would sooner hearken to a stranger (may be a Jesuit, in a buff coat, or with a blue apron before him?) seek to any mountebank that comes they know not whence, is here to-day and gone to-morrow, than to their own ministers, who from God have the rule over them, and watch for their souls, as they that must give account to God for them? yea, whom from many years experience in life and doctrine, they have found able and faithful?

In the fear of God consider this: they are not your ministers (I speak as to the most) in their pulpits and public ministry, but these hucksters and quack-salvers in corners practising upon you, that have privily brought in damnable doctrines, and leavened so great a lump of people in the nation with sour and unsound doctrine.

If thou wouldst therefore be preserved from error, make use, as of the sword of the word in thy own hand, so of the holy skill that God hath given thy faithful minister for thy defence. Wait on his public ministry, praying for divine assistance to be poured on him, and a divine blessing from his labours to fall on thyself. If at any time thou art in the dark concerning his message, resort to him, and I dare promise thee (if he answers his name, and be a faithful minister of the gospel) an easy access, and hearty welcome to him; only come to learn, not cavil; to have thy conscience satisfied, not any itch of vain curiosity rubbed. Our Sa-

viour, who was so willing to satisfy his disciples concerning the doctrine he publicly preached, that in private he opened it to them more fully, yet when they came with nice and curious questions, did rather chuse to repel that humour by a reproof, than cherish it by a satisfying answer, *It is not for you to know the times and the seasons:* and at another time, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*— He takes Peter off from an unprofitable question, to mind a necessary duty.

CHAP. XXV.

Directions how to use this Sword, for the cutting down and conquering the Lusts in our own Bosoms, and Temptations to Sin from without.

THIRDLY, The third enemy we are to fight is made up of an army of lusts lodged within our own bosoms, which have Satan to head and lead them forth against us.

And who that believes he hath a soul to lose or save, can be unwilling to engage against this cursed combination of lusts and devils! The Romans were said, when in war with other nations, to fight for honour and glory, but against the Carthaginians, for their very life and being. In this war against sin and satan, both lie at stake. This, this is the most noble war of all others.

Noble, First, because just.

It is too true, I fear, what one saith of the wars which the great monarchs of this world wage one against another, That the cause is very seldom so clear for which they take arms, but there is some ground of scruple left in the conscience of the undertaker. But here we are put out of all doubt. This, without abusing the name, may be called *The holy war;* for it is against the only enemy that the holy God hath in the world, who hath himself taken the field, and set up his royal standard in defiance of it; to which he calls all mankind, some by the voice of a natural conscience, and others by the loud sound of his word, to repair, and upon our allegiance to him our sovereign Lord and creator, to help him against the mighty, not because he needs our help, but expects our duty, and had rather reward our loyalty, than punish our rebellion. Some have been found, who for shame have killed themselves, that their prince, through their cowardice, had lost the victory. O what confusion, then, will one day fill our faces,

faces, if we, by our faintness or treachery, do what lies in us to help satan and sin to triumph over God himself!

But again, It is a *noble war*, because hard and difficult.

This is an enemy stout and stubborn, such as will try both our skill and strength to the uttermost. Never did coward overcome in this war. What sin loseth is but by inches, and what it gains hardly lets go. They who follow this war closest, will find a life's work at least of it.

O you that love brave exploits, and hunt for enterprizes that only a few generous spirits dare undertake; here is that you look for: fighting with men, and storming of castles, is but children's play to this encounter, where devils and lusts are to be repelled. *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*, Prov. xvi. 32. Better, because he overcomes a worse enemy, infinitely more potent and puissant. Few, alas, of the world's swordsmen, so famed for their conquests, but have lived and died slaves to sin, cowardly submitting the neck of their souls to draw the iron chariot of a base lust, while they have proudly sat to be drawn in triumph by those whom they have taken prisoners in war. Thus as Hannibal was beaten at home in his own country, who was a victor in his foreign expeditions; so too many that do great feats at arms abroad, which makes them famous in this world, are miserably beaten, and shamefully trampled upon by their own corruptions at home, that will make them much more infamous in the other world.

But be not you, O ye saints, dismayed at the report of your enemies' strength and number; the greater will be your victory, and the more your captives to draw your triumphant chariot; neither let your hearts faint to see the conquering Cæsars despoiled of their ensigns of honour by this enemy, which themselves had won from others, and to die in chains, slaves to their lusts, that had lived conquerors over men. Remember, for your comfort, it is but the unbelieving world, such as are without spiritual arms, and so abandoned of God, that are left thus to become a prey to sin and satan: but you have a God on your side, who gives you the consecrated sword of his word for your defence, a weapon whose edge satan hath already felt, and therefore trembles whenever faith draws it forth. He that made this leviathan (as is said of the other, Job xl. 19.) can make this his sword to approach to him, and the heart of all thy lusts also.

But I forbear; my task in this place being not to excite you to, but direct you in the management of your fight with this your enemy, and that also only by teaching you the use of this one weapon, the Word of God, in order to repelling motions to sin from

from within, or temptations to it from satan without. First, therefore,

SECT. I.—First, Take some pains to collect out of the word the several lineaments with which the spirit of God doth paint out the deformity of sin, that so thou mayest make it the more odious, and hateful to thy thoughts, when by laying them together, thou shalt see in its true picture and portraiture (drawn by so skilful and faithful a hand) the fair face of this goodly lady, whose beauty satan doth so highly commend to thy wanton embraces.

Poor man sins upon satan's credit, and receives it into his bosom, as Jacob did his wife into his bed, before he sees its face, or knows well what it is; and therefore, as he in the morning found her to be not that beautiful Rachel, as was promised, but a bleareyed Leah; so the sinner too late, when his conscience awakes, sees himself miserably cheated and disappointed of what he looked for, and finds a purgatory where he expected a paradise.

Now that thou mayest, Christian, the better see the ugly shape of this horrid monster, Sin, observe from the word of God these four particulars concerning it.

First, The birth and extraction of it.

Secondly, The names given it.

Thirdly, Its nature; and,

Fourthly, Its properties.

1. The birth and pedigree of sin.

Who is its father, and from whom is it descended? The holy God disowns it. The sun can as soon beget darkness, as God, who is the Father of lights, be the author of sin: *From him comes every good and perfect gift*, James i. 13. But, O sin, whence art thou? Thou art not his creature, he neither made thee, nor ever moved any to thy production. Certainly if it were from him, he would like and love it: every one loves his own child, though never so black, much more doth God like what is his.—We find him looking back upon every day's work of the creation, and upon all at last, pleased with what he had done, *All was very good*, Gen. i. But of sin what he thinks, see Deut. vii. 22. Prov. vi. 16. Rev. ii. 6. 15. where he expresseth his detestation and hatred of it, from which hatred proceed all those direful plagues and judgments thundered from the fiery mouth of his most holy law against it; nay, not only the work, but worker also of iniquity becomes the object of his hatred, Psalm v. 5.—So that if God were the author of sin, he should be a hater of himself.

Well, at whose door, then, doth God lay this brat to find a father? Surely at the devil's, John viii. 44. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* And again, in the same place, *When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for*

for he is a liar, and the father of it. Sin is a brat which calls the devil both father and mother: for of himself, even of his own free-will (the womb wherein it was conceived), did he beget it; and having begot it, put it out to nurse to man. And is not man, who was made to serve and enjoy the great God his maker, highly set up, to suckle and carry this his infernal master's child about in his arms? Ah, poor man, whence art thou fallen! It is strange, that the very remembering whose offspring thyself wert, doth not strike thee into a horror, to see thy precious soul debased into such servitude as to fulfil the lusts of that cursed spirit. Never let us spit at the witch for suffering the devil's imps to suck on her body, while we can prostitute our souls to any of his lusts.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The names and titles with which the word stigmatizeth sin.

And God, to be sure, miscalls none: if a thing be sweet, he will not say it is bitter; if good, he will not call it evil: for he claps a woe upon his head that doth so, Isa. v. 20. Never think to find honey in the pot, when God writes poison on its cover. We may say of every sin in this respect, what Abigail of her husband; as is its name in scripture, so is it: if God call it folly, then there is no wisdom to be found in it. The devil indeed teacheth sinners to cover foul practices with fair names; superstition must be stiled devotion; covetousness, thrift; pride in apparel, handsomeness; looseness, liberty; and madness, mirth. And truly there is great need for sinners to do thus, to make this fulsome dish go down with less regret. There have some made a hearty meal of horse-flesh, or the like carrion under a better name, whose stomachs would have risen against it, if they had known what it was.

Therefore as persecutors of old wrapt the Christians in the skins of those beasts, which would render them the most desirable prey to those they were cast; so satan and our false hearts present sins to us under those names that will sharpen our appetites to them, or at least take away the abhorrency our consciences else would shew against them: but canst thou be content, poor soul, to be so easily cheated? Will the fire burn thee the less, into which thou art emboldened to put thy finger, because a knave that owes thee an ill turn, tells thee that it will not hurt thee? Hear rather what the God of truth saith of sin, and by what names he calls it, and you shall find, that whatever is dreaded by us, or hated, feared or loathed in all the world, they are borrowed and applied to sin: the vomit of dogs, the venom of serpents, the stench of rotten sepulchres, dunghills and jakes, the deadliest diseases and sores, gangrenes, leprosies, and plague, attributed to it, 2 Pet. ii. 20. Luke iii. 7. Rom. iii. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 17. 1 Kings viii.

viii. 38. yea, hell is raked for an expression to set it out, it being compared to the very fire of hell itself, Jam. ii. 6. And because of the penury and straightness of these appellations (not able to express its full horridness), therefore it is called by its own name, as the worst that God himself can say thereof, *Sinful sin*, Rom. vii. 13.

Now what shall be done to the thing that the great God thus loathes, and loads with such names of dishonour, thereby to signify his abhorrence of it? What? Every gracious heart will soon resolve, that he should pursue it with fire and sword, till he have executed upon it the judgment written, in its utter ruin and destruction.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, the nature of sin, as the word defines it. See its description, 1 John iii. 4. *Sin is the transgression of the Law:* A few words, but of weight enough to press the soul that commits it to hell, yea, to press sin itself to death in the heart of a saint, if laid on with these considerations,

1. Whose law it is that by sinning we break.

Not of some petty prince (and yet such conceive their honour so deeply concerned in their laws, that they take vengeance on the violators of them), but of the great God, whose glorious name is in every attribute assaulted and reproached by the sinner, yea the very life and being of God endeavoured to be destroyed; *Peccatum est Deicidium.* For he that would rob God of his honour, is an enemy to his very being, because God's being is so wrapped up in his glory, that he cannot out-live the loss of it. These, it is true, are above the reach of the sinner's short arm, but that is no thanks to him, because his sin aims at these, though it cannot carry his shot so far as to hurt him.

2. What law it is.

Not cruel, writ with the blood of his creatures, as the laws of some tyrant princes are, who consult with their own lust, and not the people's good in their edicts. But this law is equal and good; in the keeping of which is life. So that no provocation is given by any rigour of unnecessary taxes imposed upon us to rise up against it. *What iniquity*, saith God, *have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?* Jer. ii. 5. He that put away his wife, was to give her a bill of divorce, declaring the cause of his leaving her. Thus God condescends to expostulate with sinners, and asks what evil they can charge upon him or his government, that they forsake him? But alas, no more cause can be given, than why a beast in a fat, sweet pasture, should break the hedge to get into a barren heath, or a dirty lane, where nothing but starving is to be had.

3. At whose motion the poor creature trangresseth the good law

law of God, and that is of a cursed spirit, the devil, no less our enemy than God's enemy.

Now for a child, at the solicitation of his father's greatest enemy, and his own also, to take up rebellious arms against a dear loving parent, adds to the monstrosity and unnaturalness of the fact. This thou dost, Christian, when by sin thou transgressest the law of God.

And now by this time methinks I see the blood to rise and boil with anger in thee, while thy God points to thy sin and tells thee, this, O my child, is the enemy that would take away my glory and life too, by thy means, who by a debt both of nature and grace, owest thy whole self to live and die for the maintaining of my honour! art thou not as ready to fall upon thy sin, and drag it to execution, as the servants of Ahashuerus were to lay hold on Haman, and cover his face as a son of death, when their prince did but vent his wrath conceived against him? Esther vii. 8. Certainly were but the love of God well kindled in our bosoms, we should even spit fire on the face of any that durst tempt us to sin against him.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, The properties of sin, discovered by the word of God. I shall content myself with three. It hath,

1. A defiling.
2. A disturbing.
3. A damning property.

1. A defiling property, called *Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, 2 Cor. vii. 1.

It besmears both. The *whole world* is said to *lie in wickedness*; as a beast in his dung and ordure, as a rotten carcase in its slime and putrefaction, 1 John v. 19. It is that leprosy which infects man, and the very house he lives in also. Wherefore did God send the flood in Noah's time, but to wash away that filthy generation as dung from the face of the earth? But because this pest-house of the world is not cleared sufficiently, it is reserved for a more thorough purgation by fire at the last day.

Do but think, Christian, what a beauty man was, till he was pock-broken, if I may say so, by sin, and what a glory shined upon the whole creation, before sin by its poisonful breath had dimmed and blasted it; and then guess what a filthy thing it is, what a strong poison it is, that not only diffuseth its malignity through the soul and body of man, but hath such direful effects upon the whole compages and frame of the visible creation, that it will never come to its own beauty, till, like a battered cankered piece of plate, it be melted and refined by an universal conflagration.

And is not your soul yet loathed with the thoughts of sin? Some beasts (they say), the ermine for one, will die before she will

will be got into the dirt to defile her beautiful skin; and wilt thou, Christian, and that after it hath cost Christ his blood to purchase his Spirit for thy cleansing, bedaub thyself in sin's puddle? God forbid. Did Ezekiel so abhor to eat man's dung imposed on him by God, that he cries out, *Ah, Lord God, behold, my soul hath not been polluted*, &c. Ezek. iv. 14. And is any unclean lust which God himself compares to no better thing, so dainty a bit as to be desired by thee, Christian, who hast sat at Christ's table, and knowest what entertainment there is to be had? Methinks thou shalt rather cry out with the prophet, Ah, Lord! my soul hath not, or at least let it not be polluted with this abominable thing.

2. A disturbing property.

Sin, it breaks the peace of the soul, yea, of the whole world: It brings confusion with it, and makes the place a seat of war, wherever it comes. An army of evils are at his heels, to sit down where it is lodged: *If thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door*, Gen. iv. 7. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God*, Isa. lvii. 21. Here is God's hand, we see, to the warrant, sentencing the sinner to the rack of a self-torturing conscience. Who is able to express the anguish which an accusing conscience feels! and those dreadful fits of convulsion with which it rends and tears itself! one you hear roaring and crying out, *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither any rest in my bones, because of my sin*, Psalm xxxviii. 3. Another, *While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted*, Psalm lxxxviii. 15. A third, *My punishment is greater than I can bear*, Gen. iv. 12. And a fourth, so unable to stand under the clamour of his guilt, that he runs to the halter, and hangs himself, to get out of the din and dolour it makes in his ears, Mat. xxvii. 5. And is not he like to be well cured of his torment, that throws himself into hell-fire to find ease?

And as sin disturbs the inward peace of the soul, so the outward peace of the world. What else but sin hath put the world in an uproar, and set all the creatures together by the ears? *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not from your lusts that war in your members?* Jam. iv. 1.— This sets nearest relations at bitter feud, firing the house over their heads, that husband and wife, parents and children, cannot abide together under one roof. Delilah, she betrays her husband into his bloody enemies' hands: and Absalom riseth up to take away the life of his dear father. This is the whisperer that *separates chief friends*, and makes those that have drank of our cup, to lift up the heel upon us; and with whom we have taken sweet counsel together, to plot our ruin, and give counsel against our very life.

In

In a word, such a kindle-fire sin is, that the flames it kindles fly not only from one neighbour's house to the other, but from one nation to another. All the water in the sea, that runs between kingdom and kingdom, cannot quench the wars it raiseth: But it makes men that live at one end of the world, thirst for the blood and treasure of those that live at the other: so that the earth is but as a cock-pit, where there is little else but fighting and killing one another. And is this the guest thou canst find in thy heart to bid welcome within thy bosom?

Thirdly, and lastly, A damning property.

If all the mischief sin did us was in this world, it were bad enough; but considering our short stay here, it would give some ease to our thoughts, that we should have done with it and this life together: but to be worried here by it, and damned for it also to eternal torments in another world, this is intolerable! methinks that place, Mat. xxv. 41. *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*, should make us sit down and consider, whether any sin be so pleasurable or desirable, as should make it worth lying in endless torments to obtain and enjoy it a few fleeting days and months, that are at an end almost as soon as their beginning commenceth.

Thou knowest, sinner, already the best of thy sinful pleasure, but not the worst of thy punishment, which is so great as loseth its chief emphasis by translating it into our language, and clothing it with expressions borrowed even from those things that most dread us in this life: alas, what is the fire and brimstone we see and fear so much here, to that which burns in the infernal lake! truly little more than painted fire on the wall, is to that which burns on our hearth. This in our chimney was made for our use and comfort chiefly, but that fire in hell (whether material or not, is not material to know) is for no other end than to torment sinners in; this in our kitchen is kindled by a little puff of wind, and quenched by a little water: *but the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle that*, Isa. xxx. 33. and where shall we find buckets to quench that which God kindles? They say, smelling of the earth is healthful for the body; and taking in the scent of this sulphurous pit by frequent meditation, cannot but be as wholesome for the soul. If many had descended thus into hell, while on earth, their souls had not, it is like, dropped into hell, when their bodies fell into the grave.

O Christian, be sometimes walking in the company of those places of scripture, which set out the state of the damned in hell, and their exquisite torments there. This is the true house of mourning, and the going into it, by serious meditation, is a sovereign means to make the living lay it to heart; and laying it

to

to heart, there is the less fear that thou wilt throw thyself by thy impenitency into this so uncomfortable place, who art offered so fair a mansion in heaven's blissful palace, upon thy faith and repentance.

CHAP. XXVI.

Some Scripture Answers, fitted to the common Arguments of the Tempter with which he usually enticeth to Sin, are here brought to the Christian's Hand for his Defence.

SECONDLY, Provide thyself with scripture answers to satan's false reasonings, with which he puts a fair colour on his foul motions, the better to gain thy consent.

He is wily, thou hadst need be wary. He doth not only propound the sinful object, but also sets a fair gloss upon it, and urges the soul with arguments to embrace his offer. And when sin comes thus forth Goliah-like, it is not Saul's armour, but the smooth stones of the brook; not thy own resolution, but the divinity of scripture arguments that can preserve thee, or prostrate thy enemy. Now thou wilt find in the word an answer put into thy mouth to repel all satan's sophistry. And this indeed is to be an Apollos, mighty in the scriptures, when we can stop the devil's mouth, and choke his bullets, with a word seasonably interposed betwixt us and the temptation.

It will not therefore be amiss to give a few instances whereby this direction may be made more easily practicable in the hand of weaker Christians.

SECT. I.—First, Sometimes satan thus insinuates himself into a soul. What, man! will one sin, if yielded to, so much hurt thee? One mole doth not mar the beauty of the face, nor can one sin spoil the beauty of thy soul; and it is no more that I am a suitor for. If I bade thee wallow in every puddle, thou mightst well abhor the motion; but why art thou so afraid of one spot being seen on thy garment? The best jewel hath its flaw, and the holiest saint his failings.

Now to refel this motion, when so mannerly and modestly proposed;

Answ. First, The word will tell thee that no sin goes single. It is impossible to embrace or allow one sin, and be free of others. For,

1. He that yields to one sin, casts contempt upon the authority that made the whole law, and upon this account breaks it all.

Whosoever

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all, Jam. ii. 10. And he gives the reason in the next words, *For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.* Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor of the law. Not that he is guilty of all distributively, but collectively, as Estius well notes. For the law is one copulative; one commandment cannot be wronged, but all are interested in the same; as the whole body suffers by a wound given to one part: *God spake all these words*, Exod. xx. They are ten words, but one law.

2. By allowing one sin, we disarm and deprive ourselves of having a conscientious argument to defend ourselves against any other sin.

He that can go against his conscience in one, cannot plead conscience against any other: for if the authority of God awes him from one, it will from all; *How can I do this, and sin against God?* saith Joseph. I doubt not but his answer would have been the same, if his mistress had bid him to lie for her, as now when she enticed him to lie with her. The ninth commandment would have bound him as well as the seventh. Hence the apostle exhorts, *not to give place to the devil*, Eph. iv. 27. Implying, by yielding to one, we lose our ground, and what we lose, he gains; and let him alone to improve advantages. The little wimble once entered, the workman can then drive a great nail; one sin will widen thy swallow a little, that thou wilt not so much strain at the next.

3. Allow one sin, and God will give you over to other sins.

Wherefore God also gave them up unto uncleanness, Rom. i. 23. The gentiles gave themselves to idolatry, *ver.* 22. and God gave them up unto other beastly lusts. When Judas began to play the thief, I question whether he meant to turn traitor; no, his treason was a punishment for his thievery. He allowed himself in a secret sin, and God gave him up to one more open and horrid. But,

4. Suppose thou couldst, which is impossible, take one sin into thy bosom, and shut all the rest out, yet the word will tell thee,

First, That thou art a servant to that one sin. *His servants ye are, to whom ye obey*, Rom. vi. 16. And consequently the devil's servants, whose kingdom you endeavour to hold up, by defending though but this one castle against God your maker.—Neither will it excuse thee to say, thou intendest not so. Haply covetousness is thy sin, and it is thy profit thou aimest at, not siding with the devil against God. Though this is not thy express end who sinnest, yet it is the end of the sin which thou committest, and of satan that putteth thee upon the work, and so will be charged upon thee at last.

The common soldier ordinarily looks no higher than his pay, this is it draws him into the field, yet they make themselves traitors by assisting him that leads them on against their prince; and it will not serve the turn for them to say they fought for their pay, and not to dethrone him. *Ahab sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord*, 1 Kings xxi. 20. And yet we read not that he made any express covenant with the devil, but the meaning is, he did that which in effect amounted to no less. He knew, that if he sinned, he should pay his soul for it, and he would have his lust, notwithstanding he was acquainted with its price, and therefore interpretatively he sold his soul that he might enjoy his sin.

Secondly, Thou mayest learn from the word, that thou canst not be a servant to any one sin, and to God at the same time.—*You cannot serve two masters; you cannot serve God and mammon*, Matt. vi. 24. By mammon is meant one particular lust, covetousness. One body may as well have two souls, as one soul two masters. One soul hath but one love; and two cannot have the supremacy of it. I have heard indeed of a wretch that said, *He had one soul for God, and another for the devil also;* but if he hath one soul in hell, I am afraid he will not find another for heaven; and one sin will as certainly send thee thither, as a thousand. *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God.* He doth not only exclude him that is *all these*, but *any of these*. It is certain all men shall die; but all do not die of the same disease. And as certain all impenitent sinners shall be damned, but one is damned for one, and a second for another, but all meet at last in the same hell.

SECT. II.—Secondly, May be thou art tempted to sin by an opportunity of committing it in secret, where thou shalt not pay the loss of thy credit for the purchase of thy pleasure.

This was the snare the simple young man's foot was taken in, Prov. vii. 18. his strumpet tells him, *the good man was from home*, the coast was clear; they might drink their stolen waters without fear of being indicted for the theft. Too many, alas, whom shame of the world keeps from knocking at the fore-door, are easily persuaded to sin if they may slip in at the postern.—Saul himself, though ashamed to go to a witch in his princely robe, because he had possest the world with an opinion of his hatred of that sin, by putting such to death, yet is not afraid to go incognito to one. Therefore, as it added much to the weight of the temptations with which the devil assaulted Christ, that he came to him in the wilderness and solicited him, but to a private, yea secret acknowledging of him, where none could tell tales what passed between them: So it doth to the glory of that complete victory which Christ got over satan in them all. And how got

Christ

Christ it, but by this sword of the word? Take thou, Christian, therefore, the same weapon up to defend thyself against the same enemy.

First, The word will tell thee, that God is privy to thy most secret sin.

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. Psal. xc. 8. They are as plainly seen by him, as any thing can be by us at noon-day. Nay, he doth not only see and know them, but he sets them before him as a mark to shoot his arrows of vengeance at. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,* Prov. xv. 3. As he sees when thou shuttest thy closet to pray in secret, and will reward thy sincerity; so he seeth when thou dost it to sin in secret, and will reward thy hypocrisy.

Now, if *a king sitting on his throne, scattereth away all evil with his eyes,* Prov. xx. 8. how much more powerfully would the eye of God, if seen looking on us, chase away the most secret motion that stirreth in our heart to sin! better all the world to see thee, than God who hath wrong done him by the sin, and therefore concerned in justice to do himself right upon thee. He cannot let any go unpunished, because a righteous judge; but there are some sins which require a more immediate hand of divine vengeance than other, and therefore called crying sins.—And they are such, which either by the place and power of the offender, man dares not punish, or else so secretly committed, that man cannot take cognizance of the fact. As Cain's bloody murder on his brother, *Thy brother's blood crieth,* Gen. iv. 10.

2. The word will inform thee of an informer that thou hast in thy own bosom; thy conscience, I mean, which goes along with thee, and is witness to all thy fine-laid plots, and what it sees it writes down, for it is a court of record.

Thou canst not sin so fast, but it can write after thee; and the pen with which conscience writes down our sins, hath a sharp nib, it cuts deep into the very heart and soul of the sinner. The heathens, their thoughts are said *to accuse them,* Rom. ii. 15. And no torment in the world comparable to an accusing conscience. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Prov. xviii. 14. Who? Not men, not angels. *Nullus oculus molestior cuique sito: Non est aspectus quem tenebrosa conscientia suffugere magis velit, minus possit.* Bern. No eye affrights a sinner more than his own; it is that which he most desires to run from, but least can. Such a poor wretch is like Regulus in his barrel stuck with nails, which way soever he turns himself, *in vulnus inclinat,* he is pricked and wounded. O read those sad instances of Cain, Saul, and Judas.

with others upon scripture record, who have been upon this rack, and thou wilt be afraid to sin where conscience stands by.

3. Consult the word, and thou wilt find, that God usually hath put them to shame in this world, that have promised themselves most secresy in their sinning.

It is one of God's names, to be a *revealer of secrets*, Dan. ii. 47. and among other secrets, he forgets not to bring to light, these *hidden things of darkness*, 1 Cor. vi. 5. those sins that are forged in a darker shop than others, and that often in this world. Indeed the attribute of his Omniscience suffers deeply by secret sins: In these men speak what base thoughts they have of God, as if he were a God of the day, and not of the night; therefore, to vindicate this attribute, and to strike an inward fear thereof into the hearts of men, he doth dig these foxes out of their holes, wherein they earth temselves, and expose their sins to the view of the world, which they thought none should have known besides themselves and their partners in the sin.

Such an effect had the discovery of Ananias and Sapphira's secret sin. *And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*, Acts v. 11, 13. See therefore how God had befooled men when they have arted it most in packing their sins, to hide them from the world's eye. No art was wanting in the patriarchs to conceal their unnatural sin against their brother; what a fair, probable tale do they tell the old man their father, who believed all, and enquired no further? How true were they among themselves, though so many in the plot? that none of them should blab it out at any one time or other, was strange. How long did this sleep before discovered? and what a strange providence to bring their wickedness to light?

So Gehazi played his part cunningly enough, one would think, which made him so bold to come before his master, and impudently lie to his face, not dreaming the least that he was privy to his sin; yet this man is found out, and for the garments he got of Naaman by a lie, he had another given him of the Lord, which he was to wear as a livery of his sin, for he was cloathed with a leprosy; a garment not as others, to hide his shame, but to discover it to all the world: a garment more lasting than the two changes of suits he had from the Syrian; for this lasted him all his life; neither was it then worn out, but to be put on by his children after him, 2 Kings v. 27.

In a word, be he never such a saint, yet if he goes about to save himself from the shame of a sin by any secret plot of wickedness, he takes the direct way to bring that upon him which he contrives to keep off. Uriah's blood was shed only as a sinful expedient to save David's credit, that would have suffered, if his folly with Bathsheba should become a town-talk: And how sped

he

he with this his plot? Ah, poor man! all comes out to his greater shame: this engaged God to lay him open; David shall know that God will be as tender of his own honour, as he is of his credit; *For thou didst this thing secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun,* 2 Sam. xii. 12. yea, David is at last sick of his own plot: and he was not at first more studious to hide his sin, than he was afterwards willing to acknowledge it, and therefore we find him, Psal. li. standing as it were in a white sheet, and doing voluntary penance for his sin in all the churches of God, so long as the scriptures shall be read in their assemblies, to the end of the world.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, May be thou art tempted to sin by the example of others.

Indeed, though example be an inartificial argument, yet it is of great force with many, especially when the persons quoted in favour of a sin, be either the most, or thought to be the best.—When most, they carry presently with them those that are false-hearted, or weak-headed, as dead fishes and light straws swim with the stream; for with such, shame strikes the greatest stroke, and a multitude to bear one company in a sin, takes away the shame of it; *Where all go naked, few will blush;* they rather are exposed to shame that will be singular, and not do as the rest. As Micaiah, who was made a scorn because he would not tune his pipe to Ahab's ear, nor join with the whole college of his flattering chaplains in their judgment. Or if they be such who have the reputation for wisdom and piety, then it oft proves a snare to them that are none of the worst; which should make all of high place or eminent in grace, very circumspect what opinion or practice they espouse. The devil is very brag, when he can get such to set their hand to his testimonial. The country will soon ring of this, and their example be shewn every where to draw in others. Why such a one is of this opinion, he holds this, and doth that, I hope he is one you reverence and honour.

Now in this case, consult with the word, and it will bring thee off this temptation.

1. The word commands, that we bring the examples of men, be they who they will, to the test of the word.

Is it their opinion that is quoted? *To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,* Isa. viii. 20. It is the light which a man carries in his lanthorn, for which we follow him; that gone, we leave him. Now we see by this scripture, he hath no light, that hath not the word to vouch his opinion: So that neither knows he whither himself goes, nor we whither such a one will lead us.

Again, Is it the practice of another that is laid before thee for

thy copy to write after? what saith the word? *Follow not a multitude to do evil,* Exod. xxiii. 2. Examples are not our warrant, but precepts; neither will it procure a man a discharge, because had a precedent in his sin. Adam indeed said the woman gave him the apple, but it did not excuse him from paying the reckoning with her; she was indeed first in the transgression, yet both met in the punishment. Wouldst thou eat poison, because another dares be so bold to be thy taster? Surely his example cannot make the poison less deadly to thee that dost pledge him.

Secondly, The word will tell thee that the best of saints do not always foot it right, but too oft are found to tread awry: *In many things we offend all,* Jam. iii. 2.

And he that is himself subject to step awry, may also lead thee aside. Therefore Paul, as holy a man as lived, when he calls others after him, would have them follow him with their eyes open, to see whither he followed Christ, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,* 1 Cor. xi. 1. The holiest life of the best saint on earth is but an imperfect translation of the perfect rule of holiness in the word, and therefore must be tried by it. Hence it is the character of sincerity to look to the way, rather than the company. *The highway of the upright is to depart from evil,* Prov. xvi. 17. He consults with the word, whether the way be good or evil: if he finds it evil, he will not into it to bear another company, no, though he be a saint. Indeed God suffers some to step awry, for the proof of others. *Thus heresies come, that they who are approved, may be made manifest,* 1 Cor. xi. 19. And Deut. xiii. 1. *Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, for the Lord thy God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart.*

Thus I have given a few instances, by which you see how this sword of the word, as that in the cherubim's hand, may be turned every way to preserve the Christian from venturing to sin upon any pretence, whatever it be.

CHAP. XXVII.

Two Directions more, how to use the Word for our Defence, against Temptations to Sin.

THIRDLY, Hide the word in thy heart.

This was David's preservative, Psal. cxix. 11. *Thy word I have hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.* It was

was not the Bible in his hand to read it, not the word on his tongue to speak of it, nor in his head to get a notional knowledge of it: but the hiding it in his heart, that he found effectual against sin. It is not meat in the dish, but stomach, that nourisheth; not physic in the glass, but taken into the body, that purgeth.—Now *Heart* in scripture, though it be used for all the faculties of the soul, yet principally for the conscience and the affections.

SECT. I.—First, For the conscience. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iv. 20. That is, if our conscience condemn us justly, to be sure our case is sad, because God knows by us more than we by ourselves, and can charge us with many sins that conscience is not privy to.

Now thus, Christian, labour to hide the word in thy heart, that is, in thy conscience; let it there have a throne, and it will keep thee in a holy awe.

First, Look upon the word as stamped with divine authority, the law which the great God gave thee, his poor creatures, to walk by.

This impressed on thy conscience, would make thee tremble at the thought of a sin, which is the traitor's dagger that strikes at God himself, by the contempt it casts upon his law. And if some assassins, intending to stab a prince, have been so overawed with a few beams of majesty, shot from his mortal brow, that their hearts would not serve them to make the horrid attempt; how much more must the dread of the great God's majesty, darted from his word into the creature's conscience, deter him from practising any treason against his maker? *Princes persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word*, Psal. cxix. 161. As if he had said, I had rather incur their wrath for my holiness, than make thy word my enemy by my sin.

Secondly, Look upon the word of God, as that law by which thou art to be judged at the great day.

God will judge the secrets of all men, according to my gospel, Rom. ii. 13. Then the book of thy conscience shall be opened, and compared with this, and accordingly will sentence of life or death be pronounced by Christ, thy judge. Thou mayest know before hand how it will go with thee at that day; if now thou canst not stand before the word, as opened by a poor minister, and applied by thy own conscience, what will you do when it is opened by Christ?

Now thy conscience from the word condemns thee, but not finally; for by thy timely repentance and faith, the sentence of this private court may be reversed, and the word which even now bound thee over to death, will acquit and justify thee. But at that great day of assize, there will be a final decision of thy cause.

If then the judgment goes against thee, thou art a lost man for ever. No reversing the sentence to be expected, not so much as a reprieve to stay the execution: but as the word goeth out of the judge's mouth, the sinner's face is covered, to be immediately delivered into the tormentor's hands. And darest thou now, O man, bid any lust welcome, while thou seest the gibbet set up, and the everlasting chains prepared, in which the word of God dooms every sinner to hang? Canst thou read thy sentence, and yet like thy sin, that brings it inevitably upon thy head?

Secondly, Heart in scripture is most frequently taken for the will and affections.

My son, give me thy heart, Prov. xxiii. that is, thy love. So Deut. x. 12. *To love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* And thus, Christian, to hide the word in thy heart, would be a rare antidote against the poison of sin. The chains of love are stronger than the chains of fear. Herod's love of Herodias, was too hard for his fear of John. He had some hold of his conscience that awed him and bound his hands awhile. But his minion had his affections, and the heart can unbind the hands; his love to her made him shake off his respect to him, and at last imbrue his hands in his blood.

He that is only prisoner to the command, and bound to his good behaviour by the chains of terror, which the threatening claps upon his conscience, may have these knocked off, and then he will shake off his obedience also. But he that loves the word, and the purity of its precepts, cannot turn traitor. When such a one sins, he makes as deep a wound in his own heart, as in the law; and therefore trembles at displeasing God, Psal. cxix. 119, 120. *I love thy testimonies; my flesh trembleth for fear of thee.* O that is the blessed fear, which is the daughter of love.

Now to inflame thy heart with love to the word, consider, that it is the faithfullest monitor, and the sweetest comforter thou hast in all the world.

First, It is thy faithfullest monitor.

It tells thee plainly of all thy faults, and will not suffer sin to lie upon thee, but points to the enemy that haunts for the precious soul's life; it discovers all the designs and plots satan and thy beloved lusts have against thee. This made David love it so dearly, Psal. xix. 10. *Moreover, by them thy servant is warned;* besides all its other good offices it doth for thee, it warns thee of every danger, and shews thee how to escape it. O how should this endear it to thee! Did Ahashuerus heap such abundant honour upon Mordecai, who had but once been a means to save his life, by discovering a treason plotted against his person? How much more shouldst thou honour and love the good word of God, which hath so often saved thy soul out of thy spiritual enemy's hands,

hands, and doth daily give thee warning how to escape the snares of sin, without which it were impossible for thee to find them out, or avoid them! Was David so affected with the wisdom and love of Abigail in the advice she gave him, whereby he was kept from shedding blood in his fury, that he took her into his bosom to be his wife, as a reward of her kindness to him! And shall not the counsel the word hath given thee, make thee in love much more with it!

Secondly, The word is thy sweetest comforter.

When the poor soul is distressed with guilt, and conflicteth with the terrors of divine wrath for his sins, O what miserable comforters then are this world's pleasures and treasures! how little can any creature contribute to the ease of such a one! no more than he who, standing upon the shore, sees his friend drowning in the sea, but knows not how to reach any help to him. It is the word alone that can walk upon those waves, and come to the soul's relief. This is able to restore the soul, and buoy it up from the bottom of the sea of despair. Though the soul be (with those mariners) at its wits end, and knows not what to do, yet when the word stands up (as Paul before them) and, as it were, thus speaks to him, Poor soul, thou shouldst have hearkened to my voice, and not have loosed from thy harbour by sinning against God, to come to this harm and loss: but be of good cheer, do thus and thus, repent of thy folly, and speedily turn to to thy God in Christ Jesus, and there shall be no loss of thy life. *There is forgiveness with the Lord, therefore he may be feared.*

And so in all other troubles, this sends in the saint's comfort; when the world gives him gall, this brings wine; when it meets with nothing but crosses and vexations from that, this sweetly recreates and cheers his spirits. Here the Christian hath those cooling waters with which he quencheth and allays all his sorrows. And you know what a treasure, a spring or fountain is accounted in dry and hot countries. Surely, Christian, when thou considerest how many a sweet draught thou hast had from the wells of salvation, thou wilt cry out with David, Psal. cxix. 93. *I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.* I do not wonder to see thy enemy endeavour to stop thy well at which thou shouldst draw thy comfort, but that he should be able to persuade thee to do it thyself, is strange.

SECT II.—Fourthly, Plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace.

He that hath law on his side, we say, may sue the king; and he that hath a promise on his side, may with humble boldness commence his suit with God. As the veins in the body have arteries to attend them with spirits, so precepts in the word have promises to inspirit the Christian, and empower him with strength for his duty.

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Is there a command to pray? There is also a promise to enable for prayer? Zech. xii. 10. Rom. viii. 26. Doth God require us to give him our heart? *My son, give me thy heart*, Prov. xxiii. 26. The promise saith, *He will give a new heart to us*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Doth he command us to mortify our corruptions? and doth he not promise, *Sin shall not have dominion over us?* Rom. vi. 14. Now to obtain this promise, thou must plead and press it believingly at the throne of grace. *Quod lex imperat, fides impetrat;* what the precept commands, the prayer of faith begs and receives. Look therefore thou takest God in thy way: First besiege heaven, and then fear not overcoming sin and hell, when thou hast conquered heaven. Now thou warrest at God's cost, and not thy own; he that sets thee on, will bring thee off. David was a man at arms, and could handle his weapon against this enemy, as well as another, yet dares not promise himself success till he hath made God his second, Psal. cxix. 132. *Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.*

But if thou thinkest to steal a victory by the strength of thy own resolution, expect an overthrow. And it will be a mercy thou shouldst be so served; for a foil will learn thee humility for the future, but a victory would increase thy pride; and that is a sad victory, when one sin carries away the spoils which thou hast taken from another. Jehoshaphat took the right course to speed, who, though he had almost a million of men he could draw into the field, and that without draining his garrisons, yet bespeaks God's help, as if he had not a man to fight for him, 2 Chron. xx. 12. *We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.* If an Alexander, or a Cæsar, had been at the head of such an army, I warrant you they would have known what to have done, and not doubted to carry all before them.—But Jehoshaphat, a holy humble man, was better instructed. He knew an host signifieth nothing, which hath not the Lord of hosts with them; and that the most valiant can find neither heart nor hand in the day of battle, without his leave who made both.

Nor wilt thou, Christian, be able to use thy grace in an hour of temptation, without new grace from God to excite and inforce what thou hast already received from him; and if thou expectest this from him, he expects to hear from thee; neither speaks it God unwillingly to give what he hath promised, because he pays not the debt of the promise until it be sued for at the throne of grace. No, God takes this method, only to secure his own glory in the giving, and also to greaten our comfort, by receiving it in this way of prayer, which is a fit expedient to attain both.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

How the Christian may use the Sword of the Word for his Defence, in any great Affliction, outward or inward. And one Direction towards it insisted upon.

FOURTHLY, I come now to give some little help by way of direction, how the Christian may use this sword of the word for his defence against the fourth enemy and the last, but not the least.

And this is an army made up of many bands of afflictions, which from without invade, and within distress him. The Christian in this world, stands not, as you may see some houses, so fenced and shadowed with hills or woods, that the wind beats but upon one side of them. No, he lies open to storms and tempests from all quarters of the heaven: We read of a strange kind of wind that once *smote the four corners of the house*, in which Job's children were. Truly thus the Christian's afflictions beset him round, no corner left unassaulted, and very often he is smitten on all sides at once; crost in his estate, feeble in his body, and afflicted in his spirit all at once; and when so many seas of sorrows meet, it is no easy work for the poor Christian's heart to stand unbroken amidst the concurrent violence of their waves. Though this is most certain, that those dejections and perturbations with which the minds of the best saints are so discomposed and ruffled, yea sometimes dismayed and distressed, cannot be charged upon any deficiency of the gospel's principles for their support and comfort; but rather on their own impotence and unskilfulness to apply them in their several exigences.

My present task is to drop a few words of counsel to the weak Christian, how he may use and wield this sword of the word for his defence and comfort in any affliction from without, or distress of spirit from within, that may assault him. And here I must not descend to particular cases: that were a voluminous work, and not so proper for this place, but only content myself with some general rules, that may be applicable to all. Now the cordial and restorative part of the word (that I mean which principally is prepared and provided for the soul's comfort in all its discomforts and distresses) is contained in the promises; these, well studied and improved, can alone make thee a comfortable Christian.

Now if thou wouldst improve the promises, so as not to be run down and trampled upon by satan in any day of distress that comes upon thee, but comfortably lift up thy head in hope and confidence above

above the waves of thy present sorrows; then hearken to what follows in a few general rules, prepared for thy help.

1. Let it be thy first and chief care to get thy interest in, and right to the promises cleared up.

This is the hinge on which the great dispute betwixt thee and satan will move in the day of trouble, except the case be resolved before that overtake thee. O it is sad for a poor Christian to stand at the door of the promise in the dark night of affliction, afraid to draw the latch, whereas he should then come as boldly for shelter, as a child into his father's house: *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past*, Isa. xxvi. 20.

He that hath his title to the promise proved from the word to his own conscience, will not be wrangled easily out of his comfort. Naboth would not part with his inheritance for the pleasure or displeasure of a king; but stands up in the defence of his right to death: And so resolves Job, *till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me*, Job xxvii. 5. This was his evidence for heaven: and therefore satan used his best wits to make him throw it up, but never could effect it: His title was clear, and he will not be disputed out of it by satan, no nor afraid to vouch it before God himself, when God in his providence seemed most to disown him, and to handle him as an enemy. *Thou knowest that I am not wicked*, Job x. 7. He saith not, that he hath no sin, but in an humble appeal to God defends his state, that *He is not wicked*. And this kept the chariot of his hope on its wheels all along his sad sufferings, that it was never quite overthrown, though sometimes it seemed to totter and shake.

SECT. I.—*Quest.* But how shall I know whether I have a right to the promises?

Ans. First, Enquire whether thou art united to Christ by faith or no.

The promises are not a common for swine to rout in, but Christ's sheep walk, for his flock to feed in. *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise*, Gal. iii. 29. The promise is the jointure, and cannot be had but by taking the person of Christ in marriage. And faith is the grace by which the soul gives its consent to take Christ, as he is offered in the gospel; called therefore, *A receiving of Christ*, John xii. 4. There is no doubt but thou hast often been wooed in the ministry of the word by Christ's spokesmen, and that question hath been put to thee for Christ, which was once to Rebecca concerning her taking Isaac to husband, *Wilt thou go with this man?* They have from the word set him forth in his glories before thee, who he is, and what he brings. Thou hast heard the articles upon which he is most willing to proceed to marriage, and take thee, as his beloved, into his bed and bosom. As, 1. That

1. That thou send away all other lovers which have had any pretensions to thee; for he will endure no competitor or partner with him in thy affections. The names of Baalam must be taken out of Israel's mouth, and then God marries himself to her, Hos. ii. 17, 18.

2. That thou like his law as well as his love. Christ will not be husband, where he will not be master also.

3. That thou take him for better and for worse, with his cross as well as with his crown, to suffer for him as well as to reign with him.

Now, what entertainment hath this motion found with thee? Dost thou, upon the discovery made of Christ, take liking to his person? Is he transcendently amiable in thy eye, and precious to thy soul, so as to inflame thee with an insatiable desire of him? Canst thou freely pack away thy once darling lusts to gain him? And leap out of the arms of all thy carnal delights and sinful pleasures, to be taken into his embraces? Art thou as willing he should be thy Lord, as thy love? And as content to bow to his sceptre, as lie in his bosom? In a word, Art thou so enamoured with him, that thou now canst not live without him, nor enjoy thyself, except thou mayest enjoy him? Thy heart is wounded with the darts which his love and loveliness have shot into it, and he himself carries the balm about him which alone can heal it. Let him now require what he will at thy hands, nothing he commands shall be denied. If he bids thee leave father and father's house, thou wilt go after him, though it be to the other end of the world; if he tells thee thou must be base and poor in the world for his sake, thou art resolved to beg with him rather than reign without him, yea die for him, than live without him.

Come forth, thou blessed of the Lord, and put on the bracelets of the promises; they are the love tokens which I am from Christ's hand to deliver, and in his name to promise marriage to thee.—Thou art the happy soul, if there be one on earth, that Christ betrothes to himself. Languish no longer in thy unbelieving fears. For thy comfort, know, it is not Christ's custom to entangle souls affections, and when he hath got their love, then to deny his to them, and cast them off.

SECT. II.—2. Enquire what effect the promises have upon thy soul.

All who have right to the promise, are transformed by the promise. As satan shed his venomous seed into the heart of Eve by a promise, Gen. iii. 4. *Ye shall not surely die.* Whereupon she presently conceived with sin, and was assimilated into the likeness of his diabolical nature, wicked as was the devil himself. So God useth the promises of the gospel, called therefore *the immortal seed,* to beget his own image and likeness in the hearts of his elect.

2 Pet.

2 Pet. i. 4. *Exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.* That is, be partakers of such heavenly holy qualities and dispositions, as will make you like God himself.

The promises of the gospel have in them a fitness, and (when by the spirit of God applied) a virtue to purify the heart, as well as to pacify the conscience. *Now you are clean* (saith Christ to his disciples) *through the word which I have spoken to you*, John xv. 3. Lay therefore thy hand upon thy heart, and speak freely, poor soul: Have the promises had a sanctifying transforming virtue upon thee? What of God dost thou find in thy heart more since thy acquaintance with the promises than before? Some use promises as a protection for sin, rather than an argument against it. As sin takes occasion by the commandment to work in the carnal heart all manner of concupiscence; so many are from the promise emboldened to sin more freely. Like mountebanks that drink poison in confidence of their antidote.

Now which way works the promise upon thy heart? If the seal of the promise leaves not the impress of God's image on thee, it ratifies no good to thee. If it produceth no holiness in thee, it brings no joy to thee. In a word, if the promise be not to thee a seed of grace, it is no evidence for glory. But if thou canst find it leaves the superscription of God upon thee, then it assures the love and favour of God to thee.

SECT. III.—3. Enquire in what posture thy heart stands to the word of command.

The promise may be as sweet to thy palate, this thou rollest like a lump of sugar under thy tongue, but are not thy teeth set against the command, as if it were gall and wormwood? Thou smilest on the promise; but when put in mind of thy duty to the command, then haply thy countenance is changed, and a frown sits on thy brow. As if God were some austere master that breaks his servants backs with heavy burdens: and thou couldst wish with all thy heart, that a dispensation might be procured for thee, to break now and then a command, without forfeiting thy claim to the promise: But because this is not to be hoped for, thou art so kind to thyself, as to give thyself leave to bow down to some idol of pleasure or profit that thou hast set up in thy heart, and hopest God will be merciful to thee, because it is only in this or that one way thou makest bold with him in. If this shoe fit thy foot, this be the true character of thy heart, which God forbid, thou hast no lot belongs to thee in the lap of the promise.

We have a comfortable promise, Psal. l. 15. but a guard is set about it, that no disobedient wretch should gather its sweet fruit, ver. 16. *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest*

hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee? On the other hand, if thou canst in truth say, That it is not the holy commandment thou art offended with, but with thyself, because thou canst obey it no more perfectly; that it is not grievous to thee to keep, but break the laws of God; and though thy foot too often slips, yet thy heart cleaves to them, and will not let thee lie where thou fallest, but gettest up to mend thy pace, and mind thy steps better; for thy comfort know, poor soul, this sincere respect thou hast to the commandment, is a most comfortable evidence for thy true title to the promise. When David was able to vouch his love to the commandment, he did not question his title to the promise, Psal. cxix. 113. there he asserts his sincere affection to the precepts, *I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.* Mark, he doth not say he is free from vain thoughts, but he hates them; he likes their company no better than one would a pack of thieves that break into his house. Neither saith he, that he fully kept the law, but he loved the law, even when he failed of exact obedience to it. Now from this testimony his conscience brought in for his love to the law, his faith acts clearly and strongly on the promise in the next words, *Thou art my hiding place and my shield, I hope in thy word,* ver. 114.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, If thou questionest thy right to one promise, enquire whether thou canst not discern thy interest in a second; which if thou canst, thou mayest conclude, thou hast a right to that other thou didst doubt of, yea and to all the rest.

For as there is a concatenation of graces, he that finds one, hath all; so of promises, he that is heir to one, hath right to all. May be when thou readest that promise, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,* Matt. v. 8. the remainders of corruption not yet fully mortified in thy heart, scare thee from applying it to thyself as thy portion. But for its next neighbour-promise, ver. 7. *Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* Haply, thou feelest such a pinching sense of thy guilt, and want of holiness, as will enforce thee to acknowledge, that if ever a man in a burning fever thirsted for drink, or one half-starved desired food, then thou dost crave and cry for the righteousness of Christ to justify thy person, and grace from Christ to sanctify thy nature.

So that thou canst not but see this promise spoken to thee.—And if this belongs to thee, then the former, and all the other with it. For they are branches in the same covenant, which God doth not dismember, but gives it entire, with all the branches growing on it, to be the believer's portion; hence it is they are called *heirs of promise,* Heb. vi. 7. Not heirs of this promise or that, but of *promise;* that is, of the covenant, which comprehends all the promises of the gospel: so that, as he hath hold of the man's whole

body, that hath fast hold of his hand, though it be but one member of it, because it is knit to the rest, and by it he may draw the rest to him: so if thou hast hold of any one promise, thou hast hold of all other, and mayest infer thy right from this to them.—And as one may draw out the wine of a whole hogshead at one tap; so may a poor soul derive the comfort of the whole covenant to himself through one promise which he is able to own and apply. *We know*, saith St. John, *that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren*, 1 John iii. 14. Eternal life is the cream and top of all covenant blessings. Now a poor Christian may, upon the inward feeling of this one grace of love in his heart (being the condition annexed to this promise) know that he is in a state of life and happiness. And why? Because wherever this grace is in truth, there are all other saving graces; Christ is not divided in these, and consequently he that can apply this promise, hath a right to all.

CHAP. XXIX.

Five Directions more upon the same Account.

SECT. I.—*Direct.* 2. TAKE some pains to sort the promises (as thou readest the scriptures) and reduce them to their proper heads.

There is a great multiplicity of trials and temptations which God is pleased to exercise his saints with, *Many are the troubles of the righteous*, Psalm xxxiv. And there is variety of promises provided to administer suitable comfort to their several sorrows. The scriptures are a spiritual physic-garden, where grows an herb for the cure of every malady. Now it were of admirable use to the Christian, if he would gather some of every sort, such especially as he hath found most to effect his heart, of which he can say with Origin, *Hæc est scriptura mea*, this portion of scripture is mine; and then to write such down, as the physician doth his receipts for this and that disease by themselves.

May it not shame the Christian, to see a scholar know every book in his great library, and what it treats on, so that he can presently go to any one of them all, and make use of their notions as he hath occasion; and that the Christian, who hath but one book to advise with, and that none of the greatest bulk, but sufficient as to make him wise unto salvation, so to make him comfortable in every condition that can befal him, should not be acquainted, if not with all, yet with some choice promises of every sort,

sort, to which he may be able to resort for counsel and comfort in the day of his distress? now the best time for this work, is, when thou art yet at ease, in the lap of health and prosperity.—The apothecary gathers his simples in the spring, which he useth in winter. The mariner provides his tackling in the harbour, before he puts forth to sea. And the wise Christian will store himself with promises in health for sickness; and in peace, for future perils. It is too late for a man to think of running home for his cloak, when on his way he is catched in a storm, *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished*, Prov. xxii. 3.

SECT. II.—Thirdly, Observe the full latitude of promises. The covenant of grace comprehends the weak Christian as well as the strong; *If children, then heirs*, Rom. viii. 17. Not if children grown to this age, or that stature; but if children.—Christ hath in his family children of all sizes, some little, and others tall Christians. If thou beest a child, though in the cradle, the promise is thy portion. *All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. *There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1.

See here is the state and relation which the creature stands in, that gives him his title to the promise. Some saints have more grace from Christ than others, and so have more skill to improve these promises than their weaker brethren, whereby their present profits and incomes from the promise are greater: but they have no more interest in Christ, than the other, and consequently, the title of the weak Christian is as true to the promise, as of the strong. Shall the foot say, Because I am the lowest member of the body, therefore the tongue will not speak for me, or the head take care of me? We will grant thee to be of the least and lowest rank of Christians; yet thou art in Christ, as the foot is in the body. And Christ hath made provision in the promise for all that are in him. We disfigure the promises when we make them look asquint, with an eye upon one saint, and not on another, whereas they belong to all; *He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life*, John iii. 36. Who now is there meant? Only he that believes above doubting? I trow not. He that bids us receive the weak in faith, will not himself reject them.

SECT. III.—Fourthly, Be much in meditation of the promises. Whence is it that the poor Christian is so distressed with the present affliction that lies upon him, but because he museth more on his trouble, than on the promise? There is that in the promise which would recreate his spirit, if he could but fix his thoughts upon it. When the crying child once fastens on the teat, and begins to draw down the milk, then it leaves wrangling, and falls asleep at the breast. Thus the Christian ceaseth complaining of

his affliction, when he gets hold on the promise, and hath the relish of its sweetness upon his heart, Psal. xciv. 19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.*— When a swarm of bees dislodge themselves, they are all in confusion, flying here and there without any order, till at last they are hived again, then the uproar is at an end, and they fall to work peaceably as before. Truly even so the Christian will find it with his own heart. God in the promise is the soul's hive; let the Christian dislodge his thoughts thence, and presently they run riot, and fly up and down as in an affright at the apprehension of the present affliction or temptation that lies upon him, till he can recollect himself, and settle his heart again upon the promise, and then he recovers his former peace and composure.

Hence the spirit of God sounds a retreat to the troubled thoughts of afflicted saints, and calls them off from poring on that which roils them, into God, where alone they can be quiet and at ease, Psal. xxxvii. 7. *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.* And David, finding his soul (like the dove while flying over the waters) without all repose, calls it back into the meditation of God and his promise, as the only ark where it could find rest, Psal. cxvi. 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* The Christian's heart is of that colour, which his most abiding constant thoughts dye it into. Transient, fleeting thoughts, be they comfortable or sad, do not much work upon the soul, or alter its temper into joy or sorrow. Neither poison kills, nor food nourisheth, that doth not stay in the body. No, then the affliction soaks into the heart, and imbitters the Christian's spirit into perplexing fears and disconsolate dejections, when his thoughts lie steeping in his sorrows from day to day; when, like her in the gospel, he is *bowed down with a spirit of infirmity*, that he cannot raise his heart from the thought of his cross and trial, to meditate on any promise that should refresh him. Such there are, God knows, whom satan and their own pensive hearts keep such close prisoners, that no comfortable meditation is suffered to speak or stay with them.

And again on the other hand, then the promise works effectually, when it is bound upon the Christian's heart, when he wakes with it, and walks with it. No pain he feels, no danger he fears, can pluck him from this breast, but as Samson *went on his way eating of the honey-comb*, so he feeding on the sweetness of the promise. Here is a Christian that will sing when another sighs; will be able to spend that time of his affliction in praising God, which others (whose thoughts are scattered and split upon what they suffer) too commonly bestow on fruitless complaints of their misery, and discontented speeches which reflect dishonourably upon God himself

Let it be thy care therefore, Christian, to practise this duty of meditation.

meditation. Do not only exchange a few words with the promise, as one does with a friend passing by his door, but invite the promise, as Abraham did the angels, Gen. xviii. not to pass away, till thou hast more fully enjoyed it. Yea, constrain it, as the disciples did Christ, to stay with thee all the night of thy affliction. This is to *acquaint ourselves indeed with God*, the ready way *to be at peace*. This is the way the saints have taken to raise their faith to such a pitch, as to triumph over the most formidable calamities: *My beloved*, saith the spouse, *shall lie all night between my breasts*. That is, when benighted with any sorrowful afflicting providence, she will pass away the night comfortably in the meditation of his love and loveliness, his beauty and sweetness. Never will the Christian come to any kindly heat of comfort in his spirit, till he takes this Abishag of the promise into his bosom to cherish him, and this will do it indeed.

A soul that hath learnt this heavenly art of meditation, will feel no more the extremity of any affliction, than you do the sharpness of the cold weather, when you are sitting by a good fire, or lying in a warm bed. It was a notable speech of Julius Palmer, an English martyr: *To them*, said he, *that have their mind fettered to the body, as a thief's foot is to a pair of stocks, it is hard to die; but if any be able to separate his soul from his body, then by the help of God's Spirit, it is no more mastery for such a one, than to drink this cup*. He meant, if the creature be able to elevate his mind and thoughts above his sufferings by heavenly meditation on the great and precious promises, then it were nothing to suffer. Such a one's soul is in heaven, and a soul in heaven feels little what the flesh meets with on earth. Here, O ye Christians, is the most glorious prospect to be seen on this side heaven! When the soul stands upon the Pisgah of meditation, looking by an eye of faith through the perspective of the promise, upon all the great and precious things laid up by a faithful God for him, it is easy to despise the world's love and wrath when there; but, alas, it is hard for us to get up thither, who are so short-breathed, and soon tired with a few steps up this mount of God.

O let us all cry out, as once David, *Set me upon the rock that is higher than I!* And with him in another place, *Who will bring me into the strong city? wilt not thou, O God?* So, Who will lift us up to this high, holy hill of meditation, higher than all the surging waves that dash upon us from beneath, where we may see all our creature-enjoyments drowned, yet ourselves not wet-shod? wilt not thou, O God? Yes, our God would do this for us, would we but shake off our sloth, and shew, by parting with our mandrakes to purchase his company, that we highly prize

the same. My meaning is, would we but frequently retire from the world, and bestow some of that time in secret waiting upon God, which we lavish out upon inferior pleasures, and entertainments of the creature, we should invite God's holy spirit to us.

Let a wicked man set up a lust for his thoughts to dally with, and the devil will soon be at his elbow to assist him. And shall we not believe the holy spirit as ready to lend his helping hand to a holy meditation? Doubtless he is. Spread thou thy sails, and the spirit will fill them with his heavenly breath: be but thou the priest to lay the wood and sacrifice in order, and fire from heaven will come down upon it. Be thou but careful to provide fuel, gather from the promises matter for meditation, and set thy thoughts at work upon it, and the spirit of God will kindle thy affections. *While I was musing*, saith David, *the fire burned*, Psal. xxxix. 3. Isaac met his bride in the fields, and the gracious soul her beloved, when she steps aside, to walk with the promise in her solitary thoughts.

SECT. IV.—Fifthly, Plead the promises at the throne of grace.

This must not be disjoined from the former. Indeed as the ingredients of an excellent receipt do not work the cure severally, but as tempered together; so these directions being social means, must not be severed, but jointly observed. And this direction I am now speaking to, besides an universal influence it hath upon all the other, is linked by an especial affinity to the former. In vain do we charge the gun, if we intend not to let it off. Meditation filleth the heart with heavenly matter, but prayer gives the discharge, and pours it forth upon God, whereby he is overcome to give the Christian his desired relief and succour. The promise is the bill or bond, wherein God makes himself a debtor to the creature. Now, though it is some comfort to a poor man that hath no money at present to buy bread with, when he reads his bills and bonds, to see that he hath a great sum owing him; yet this will not supply his present wants, and buy him bread. No, it is the putting his bond in suit must do this.

By meditating on the promise, thou comest to see, there is support in, and deliverance out of affliction engaged for: but none will come till thou commencest thy suit, and by the prayer of faith callest in the debt, Psal. lxix. 32. *Your heart shall live that seek the Lord.* Psal. xxxiv. 5. *They looked unto him, and were lightened.* God expects to hear from you, before you can expect to hear from him. If thou restrainest prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading it at the bar: when therefore thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then ply thee to the throne of grace, and

and spread it before the Lord. Thus David, Psal. cxix. 49. *Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

SECT. V.—Sixthly, When thou hast sued the promise, act thy faith on the power and truth of God for the performance of it, and that against sense and reason, which rise up to discourage thee: For as thy faith is feeble or strong on these, so wilt thou draw little or much sweetness from the promises.

The saint's safety lies in the strength and faithfulness of God who is the promiser; but the present comfort and repose of an afflicted soul, is fetched in by faith relying on God as such.—Hence it is, though all believers are out of danger, when in the saddest condition that can befal them, yet too many, alas, of them are under fears and dejections of spirit, because their faith acts weakly on a mighty God, timorously and suspiciously on a faithful God: *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?* Mat. viii. You see the leak at which the water came in to sink their spirits, they had *little faith*. It is not what God is in himself, but what our apprehensions at present are of God, that pacifies and comforts a soul in great straights. If a man fear the house will fall on his head in a storm, though it be as unmoveable as a rock, yet that will not ease his mind till he thinks it so. Were a man under the protection of never so faithful a friend, yet so long as his head is full of fears and jealousies to the contrary, that he will at last leave and cast him off, this man must needs have an uncomfortable life, though without cause.

You see, then, of what importance it is to keep up the vigour and vivacity of thy faith on the power and truth of the promises; and if thou meanest to do this, banish sense and reason from being thy counsellors. How came Abraham not to stagger in his faith, though the promise was so strange? The apostle resolves us, *He did not consider his own body*, Rom. iv. 19. And what made Zecharias reel? He made sense his counsellor, and thought he was too old for such news to be true. This is the bane of faith, and consequently of comfort in affliction. We are too prone to carry our faith with Thomas, at our finger ends, and to trust God no further than our hand of sense can reach. It is not far that sense can reach, and but little farther that reason's purblind eye can see. God is oft on his way to perform a promise, and bring joyful news to his afflicted servants, when sense and reason conclude their case desperate.

These three, sense, reason, and faith, are distinct, and must not be confounded. Some things we know by sense, which we do not understand the reason of; as the sympathy of the loadstone with iron, why it draws the baser metal, and not gold: And the mariner's needle espousing the north point rather than any other.

Some things we apprehend by reason, that are not discerned by sense; as the magnitude of the sun's body to exceed the circumference of the earth, which, the eye being judge, may be almost covered with one's hat. And other things clear to faith, that dunce and pose both sense and reason. Paul knew by faith in that dismal sea storm, where *all hope of being saved was taken away* (that is, sense and reason being judges), *not a man should lose his life*, Acts xxvii. 25. *Be of good cheer, for I believe that it shall be even as it was told me.* When the angel smote Peter on the side, and bade him *arise and quickly follow me*, he did not allow sense and reason to cavil at the impossibility of the thing: How can I walk that am in fetters? Or, to what purpose, when an iron gate withstands us? But he riseth, and his chains fall off; he follows, and the iron gate officiously opens itself to him.

Say not, poor Christian, it is impossible to bear this affliction, or pass that temptation; let faith follow the promise, and God will loose these knots, that sense and reason tie. Luther bids, *Crucifige illud Verbum, Quare;* Crucify that word, *Wherefore.* Obey the command, and ask not a reason why God enjoins it.—It is as necessary to bid the Christian in great afflictions and temptations to crucify the word *Quomodo:* How shall I go thro' this trouble, hold out in that assault! Away with this *How shall I?* Hath not the great God, who is faithful, given thee promises enough to ease thy heart of these needless fears and cares, in that he tells thee, *He will never leave thee nor forsake thee; His grace shall be sufficient for thee; Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* And an hundred more as comfortable assurances from the lip of truth, to stand betwixt thee and all harm.

Why then dost thou trouble thyself about this improbability and mountainous difficulty that sense and carnal reason heap up, and interpose to eclipse thy comfort from thy approaching deliverance? *Shut the windows, and the house will be light*, as the Jewish proverb saith. Judge not by sense, but by faith, on an omnipotent God, and these bugbears will not scare thee. *Credere improbabilia vigoris est intellectus, sicut amare damnosa & ignominiosa vigoris est effectus, Parisiensis de fide.* It is the highest act of our understanding to believe those things which seem most improbable; as it is the highest act of love, for Christ's sake, to take pleasure in those things that bring pain and shame with them. For as in the latter, we deny ourselves the satisfaction of our carnal desires, which goes near to flesh and blood; so in the former, we deny our carnal reasonings, that would be disputing against God's power and strength.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

The whole Discourse on this Piece shut up with an Exhortation to the Ministers, to whom this Sword is especially committed.

Use. TO the ministers, into your hand this sword of the word is given in an especial manner.

Unto you the ministry of it is committed; God hath not left it at random to all, that who will may publicly preach the gospel. That which is every body's work, is nobody's. he hath therefore set up a standing office with officers in his church, on whom he hath laid this burden, and from whom he expects an account. 2 Cor. v. 20. *He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.* As a prince commissionates this or that man to be his ambassador. *O Timothy, keep that which was committed to thy trust*, 1 Tim. vi. 20.

See here, and tremble at the charge which is deposited in your hands. You are ambassadors from the great God, to treat with poor sinners concerning their eternal peace, upon those articles which are contained in the gospel. You are his under-workmen to rear up his temple in the hearts of men, and to lay every stone by the line and rule of this word. His stewards to give his family their portions in due season, and all your provisions to be taken out of this store-house. In a word, you are his shepherds to lead and feed his flock, and that in no other than these green pastures. Now if the peace be not concluded, the ambassador is sure to be called to an account where the fault lies. If the house be not built, or go to decay, woe to the negligent workman. If the family starve, what reckoning will the steward make? If the sheep wander, or die of the rot, through thy neglect, who shall pay for the loss, but the idle shepherd?

Now in order to the discharge of this your public trust, I shall only point at two duties incumbent on you both, with a reference to this word left in your hands. One to be performed in your study, the other in your pulpit.

SECT. I.—First, In your study acquaint yourselves with the word of God.

That which may pass for diligence in a private Christian's reading and searching into the scripture, may be charged as negligence upon the minister. The study of the scriptures is not only a part of our general calling (in common with him), but of our particular also; in which we are to be exercised from one end of the week to the other. The husbandman doth not more

constantly go forth with his spade and mattock to perform his daily labour in the field, than the minister is to go and dig in this mine of the scripture. He is not to read a chapter now and then, as his worldly occasions will permit; or steal a little time from his other scholarly studies to look into the bible *in transitu*, and bid it farewell; but it must be his standing exercise, his plodding work; all other must stoop to this. Suppose thou shouldst know what Plato, Aristotle, (with the rest of the princes of worldly learning) have writ, and hadst incircled all the arts within thy circumference, but art unskilful in the word of righteousness; thou wouldst be Paul's unlearned person; as unfit to be a minister, as he that hath read all the body of the law is to be a physician, if ignorant of this art.

I do not here intend to nourish the vain conceit of those sons of ignorance, who think human learning unnecessary for a minister's furniture. Truly without this, we should soon come to our old Mumpsimus, and run into the barbarism of former times. I have read of one Beda, that dissuaded Francis the first, a French king, (and that when learned Budæus was present) from his princely resolution of setting up professors of languages in his university: saying, the Greek tongue was the fountain of all heresies: but the man was found to understand not a word of Greek himself.

Indeed few or none will speak against learning, but those that have not so much of it, as to make them understand its use. I dare not bid ministers (as some fanatics have done) burn all their books but the bible. No, but I would exhort them to prefer it above all their other books, and to direct all their other studies, to furnish them with scripture knowledge; as the bee that flies over the whole garden, and brings all the honey she gets from every flower therein to her hive; so should the minister run over all his other books, and reduce their notions for his help in this.

As the Israelites offered up the jewels and ear-rings borrowed of the Egyptians to the service of the tabernacle. *Bene dicta philosophorum, sunt peculia Christianorum.* And certainly there are such jewels to be borrowed even from them, as may become the ear of a Christian, so they are refined and gospelized. Thus the *captive virgin*, Deut. xxi. when her *head was shaved, her nails pared, and her garment changed*, might be taken to an Israelite's bosom. Religion and learning revived together. The light which Erasmus brought into the schools, helped Luther's labours in the church.

But to return to the exhortation in hand: Oh let us that are ministers of the gospel, give up ourselves to the study of the word. We are, as one will call us, but younger brethren to the apostle. Ministerial gifts were left them by Christ, as the inheritance by the

the father to his eldest son and heir. But we must work for our living.

They had their knowledge of the word, as Jacob his venison, brought to their hand without hunting; but if we will know the mind of God, we must trace it out by our diligence; but ever taking prayer in our company. This I am sure was Paul's charge to Timothy, *Give attendance to reading*, 1 Tim. iv. 13. Follow thy book close, O Timothy. And ver. 15. *Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them.* And mark why, *That thy profiting may appear to all.* That is, that thou mayest appear to be a growing preacher to those that hear thee. Oh how shall the people grow, if the minister doth not! and how shall he grow, if he doth not daily drink in more than he pours out! that minister must needs spend upon the stock, that hath no comings in from a constant trade in his study. If the nurse doth not feed, and that more than another, she may soon bring herself and child into a consumption.

As we would not therefore see the souls that hang on our breats languish for want of milk, or ourselves faint in our work, let us endeavour our recruits be suitable to our expence. Study and pray; pray and study again. Think not your work is done for all the week, when the sabbath is past. Take a little breath, and return to thy labour; as the seedsman that sits down at the land's end to rest himself a while, and then rises up to go before his plough again. We have reason to be more choice of our time than others, because it is less our own; there is none in thy parish, but have a share in it. We are thieves to our people's souls, when we do not husband it to their best advantage.

All are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; yours for the service of your faith. Is the parent bound to husband his estate and time for the provision of his children? And should not the spiritual father have as natural an affection to his people? How great a labour this must needs be both to mind and body; did they understand, they would both more pity, and encourage their minister in their work. God move your hearts to it, whom he hath blessed with faithful labourers: help them in their study for you, by easing them of their worldly cares for themselves.—Some people may thank themselves that their provision is so mean, by being accessary to the minister's distractions in his work, and diversion from his calling: For by their oppression or purloining his livelihood, they force him in a manner to turn worldling; and the time which he should spend in providing bread for their souls, is laid out to get bread for his family's bodies.

SECT. II.—Secondly, In the pulpit use no other sword but this, and handle it faithfully. Remember whose errand thou bringest, and deliver it,

First,

First, Purely;

Secondly, Freely.

1. Purely: and that in a three-fold respect. *Pure* from *error; Pure* from *passion: Pure* from *levity and vanity.*

First, *Pure from error.*

Think it not enough your text is scripture, but let your whole sermon be also such, I mean, agreeable to it. Thou art an ambassador, and as such bound up by thy instructions. Take heed of venting thy own dreams and fancies in God's name, Jer. xxiii. 28. *He that hath my word, let him speak it faithfully.* That is, purely, without embasing or mingling it with his own dreams: so he expounds himself, *What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.* All is chaff, besides the pure word of God; and what hath it to do to be blended with it? Such a one may fear lest God from heaven should give him the lie while he is in the pulpit.—Oh stamp not God's image on thine own coin.

We live in high-flown times; many people are not content with truths that lie plain in the scripture; and some to please their wanton palates, have sublimated their notions so high, till they have flown out of the sight of the scripture, and unawares run themselves with others into dangerous errors. Be well assured it is a truth, before thou acquaintest thy people with it. If thou wilt play the mountebank, chuse not the pulpit for thy stage.—Make not experiments upon the souls of thy people, by delivering what is doubtful, and hath not abode the trial of this furnace.—Better feed thy people with sound doctrine, though plain meat, than that thou shouldst with an outlandish dish, light on a wild gourd that brings death into their pot.

Secondly, *Pure from Passion.*

The pulpit is an unseemly place to vent our discontent and passions in. Beware of this strange fire. The man of God must be gentle and meek, and his words with meekness of wisdom. The oil makes the nail drive without splitting the board. The word never enters the heart more kindly, than when it falls most gently: *Ride thou prosperously, because of truth and meekness,* Psalm xlv. Be as rough to thy people's sins as thou canst, so thou beest gentle to their souls.

Dost thou take the rod of reproof into thine hand? Let them see that love, not wrath, gives the blow. Nurses are careful that they do not heat their milk, knowing it will breed ill blood in the child that sucks it; the word preached comes indeed best from a warm heart, but if there goes a feverish heat withal, it breeds ill blood in the hearers thoughts; and prejudice to the person makes him puke up the milk. God knows I speak not against the minister's zeal, so it be from above, pure and peaceable. Save all thy heat for God, and spend it not in thy own cause. Admirable

was

was Moses' meekness in this respect. An high affront he received, and at their hands from whom he least deserved it, Aaron and Miriam, Numb. xii. 3. but he did not presently retort upon them, as it was his own cause, and it was enough God heard it: But when a sin was committed immediately against God, this meek man can be all of a flame. Who is on God's side? Who? He may take most liberty in reproving his people's sins against God, that takes least liberty in his own cause, and who hath a grave ready to bury injuries done to himself in.

3. *Pure from levity and vanity.*

The word of God is too sacred a thing, and preaching too solemn a work, to be toyed and played with, as is the usage of some, who make a sermon nothing but matter of wit, and to flaunt it forth in a garnished discourse. What is this to the business of preaching? Their sermon is too like a child's baby, from which if you take the dressing, the rest is worth nothing: Unpin this story, take off that gaudy phrase, and nothing is left in the discourse.

If we mean to do good, we must come not only in word, but with power. Satan budges not for a thousand such squibs and wit-cracks. Draw thou therefore the sword out of thine own fine scabbard, and strike with its naked edge: This you will find the only way to pierce your people's consciences, and fetch blood of their sins.

I do not here speak against the use of those parts which God hath given unto any; nor against the fitting and laying our discourse so as it may most insinuate into our people's affections, and steal into their hearts, by the gratefulness it finds with their ear. This is our duty, Eccl. xii. 9. *Because the preacher was wise, he sought to find out acceptable words.* Not rude, loose, and indigested stuff, in a slovenly manner brought forth, lest the sluttery of the cook should turn the stomachs of the guests. The apothecary mixeth his potion, so as his patient may take it down with less regret, if not with some delight: But still he hath a care that he weakens not its purging operation, by making it over-pleasant to the palate. As they were acceptable words, so upright, *Words of truth,* ver. 10.

Secondly, As purely, so freely.

Oh take heed of enslaving the word of God to thy own lust, or another's will, though the greatest in thy parish. *In a steward it is required that he be faithful,* 1 Cor. iv. 2. Now the preacher's faithfulness stands in relation to him that entrusts him. It is very unlikely that a steward, in giving out provision, should please all the servants in the house; such officers have least thanks when they do their work best! He that thinks to please men, goes about an endless and needless work. Man's words will not

not break thy bones. A wise physician seeks to cure, not to please his patient. He that chides when he is sick for the bitterness of the potion, will give thee thanks for it when he is recovered. The apostle passeth by the thoughts of men as a thing inconsiderable, not worthy the interrupting of him in his work. *With me it is a very small thing, I should be judged of you,* ver. 3. of the fore-quoted place. As if he had said, It shall be known at the great audit, when my master comes to reckon with me, whether I have been faithful: And it is time enough to have my name righted, when he will vindicate his own.

No doubt it was a great temptation to Micaiah, when Ahab's messenger, by colloguing with him, endeavoured to bring him in his message over unto the king's sense; but mark his noble answer, *As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith, that will I speak.* Some think Micaiah was that disguised prophet that denounced judgment against Ahab for Benhadad's dismission, and that now he was fetched out of prison; for the king bids, *Carry him back unto Ammon the governor,* 1 Kings xxii. 26. If so, then Micaiah had the advantage by one flattering sermon to have got his liberty, and the king's favour to boot: Yet to the dungeon he will go again, rather than prostitute the word to Ahab's lust. Blessed Paul was of the same mind, 2 Tim. ii. 9. *Wherein* (speaking of the gospel) *I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound.* As if he had said, they shall never make me inslave that neither in prison, nor at the block. No doubt Paul might have been free, could he have been content the word should have been bound: But he was too faithful to procure his liberty with imprisonment of the truth by a sinful silence. If ever it was a time of temptation to ministers, and there were need to stir them up in it, to keep the word of God's patience, it is in these last dreggy days of the world, of which it is prophesied, *Men shall not endure sound doctrine.*

Now therefore to bear witness to the truth, and make full proof of their ministry in such a perverse and froward generation, needs more greatness of spirit than flesh and blood can help them to. It is no trial for a minister to speak truth freely among its friends, but among those that despise it, and are enraged with the messenger for delivering his errand. This made the confession of our Lord so glorious, 1 Tim. vi. 13. It was before Pontius Pilate, a bloody enemy against him and the truth he witnessed to. Therefore our people may well bear with us when we speak freely in God's name; yea, though we come upon their ground, and our message rifles their consciences: We have it in our commission, Jer. vi. 27. *I have set thee for a tower and fortress, that thou mayest know and try their way.* If a warrant lies but in a constable's

stable's hand to search your house, you cannot be angry with him for doing his office, because you dare not stand betwixt him and the displeasure of his prince, should he neglect it.

EPHES. vi. 18.

Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance and Supplication for all Saints.

WE have at last set before you the Christian in his armour; and now he wants nothing to furnish him for the battle, or enable him for the victory, but the presence of his general to lead him on, and bring him honourably off again by the wisdom of his conduct. Which that he may obtain, the apostle sets him to praying; *Praying always, &c.* As if he had said, You have now, Christian, the armour of God; but take heed thou forgettest not to engage the God of this armour, by humble prayer, for your assistance, lest for all this you be worsted in the fight. He that gives you the arms can only teach you to use them, and enable you to overcome by their use. I am not ignorant that some make this of prayer, a piece of armour, and to be reckoned as a part of the panoply. The truth is, it matters not much in what notion we handle it, whether as a distinct piece of armour, or as a duty and means necessarily required to the use of our armour. The latter I shall follow: Partly because it hath no piece of material armour (as the others all have) alloted to it for a resemblance; as also, because by the connexion it hath (not with the last preceding words only, but) with the whole discourse of the armour, it seems to be superadded as a general duty influential upon all the pieces forenamed; and may be read with every piece. Take the girdle of truth, praying with all prayer, &c. Having on the breast-plate of righteousness, praying with all prayer, &c. and the same of the rest. The Christian's armour will rust, except it be furbished and scoured with the oil of prayer. What the key is to the watch, that prayer is to our graces, it winds them up, and sets them a-going.

In the words, observe,

First, The duty commanded, *Prayer*; with the end for which it is appointed, viz. As a help to all his graces, and means to carry on his war against sin and satan.

Secondly, A directory for prayer, wherein we are instructed how to perform this duty in six distinct heads.

First, The time for prayer, *Praying always.*

Secondly,

Secondly, The kinds and sorts of prayer, *With all prayer and supplication.*

Thirdly, The inward principle of prayer from which it must flow, *In the spirit.*

Fourthly, The guard to be set about the duty of prayer, *Watching thereunto.*

Fifthly, The unwearied constancy to be exercised in the duty, *With all perseverance.*

Sixthly, The comprehensiveness of the duty, or persons for whom we are to pray, *For all saints.*

CHAP. I.

Prayer's Usefulness and Necessity for the Saint's Defence in his Warfare shewn, and one Reason given of the Point.

WE begin with the first, the duty in general, together with the connexion it hath with the whole preceding discourse of the armour, implied in the participle, *praying*. That is, furnish yourselves with the armour of God, and join prayer to all these graces, for your defence against your spiritual enemies.

So that the point deducible from this is,

SECT. I.—Doct. *That prayer is a necessary duty to be performed by the Christian, and used with all other means in his spiritual warfare.* This is the silver trumpet, by the sound of which he is to alarm heaven, and call in God to his succour, Numb. xi. 35. The saints' enemies will not fall till God riseth; and God stays to be raised by their prayers, Psal. lxviii. 1. *Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered.* Prayer is a catholic duty, and means to be made use of in all our affairs and enterprizes. What bread and salt are to our table, that prayer is to the Christian in all his undertakings, enjoyments, and temptations. Whatever our meal is, bread and salt are set on the board: and whatever our condition is, prayer must not be forgot. As we dip all our morsels in salt, and eat them with bread; so we are to act every grace, season every enjoyment, mingle every duty, and oppose every temptation, with prayer. It hath been the constant practice of the saints in all their dangers and straights, whether from enemies within or without, from sin, devils, or men, to betake themselves to the throne of grace, and draw a line of prayer about them; accounting this the only safe posture to stand in for their defence. When God called Abraham from Haran into a strange country, where he wandered from place

place to place amidst strangers, who could not but have him in some suspicion (considering the train and retinue he had), and this their suspicion create many dangers to this holy man from the kings round about. Now it is observable, what course Abraham takes for his defence: You shall find in his removes from place to place, the memorable thing recorded of him is, that *he erected an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord,* Gen. xii. 7, 8. xiii. 3, 4. This was the breast-work he raised, and entrenched himself in. When he had once by prayer cast himself into the arms of God for protection, then he made account that he was in his castle. But what need Abraham have put himself so often to this trouble? Had he not the security of God's promise when he set forth, That God would bless them that blessed him, and curse them that cursed him? And had he not faith to believe God would be a God of his word to perform what he had promised? We confess both. But neither God's promise, nor Abraham's faith thereon, gave any licence to supersede his duty of prayer.—The promise is given as a ground of faith, and faith as an encouraging help in prayer; but neither intended to discharge us of our duty, and save us the labour of that work.—And what Abraham did, the same have all the saints ever done. The greatest spoils which they ever got from their enemies, was in the field of prayer. If Moses send Joshua into the valley against Amalek, himself will be on the mount to storm heaven by his prayer, while he is engaged in fight with the enemy below; and the victory, it is plain, was not got by Joshua's sword, so much as Moses' prayer. Jehoshaphat, when he had near a million of men mustered for the field (besides his garrisons that were all well appointed), yet we find him as hard at prayer, as if he had not had a man on his side, *We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee,* 2 Chron. xx. Now if these worthies, when they had but flesh and blood, men like themselves to contest with, did yet fetch in their help from heaven, and make such use of prayer's auxiliary force, and that when other helps were not wanting, lest they should be found under the neglect of an indispensable duty, and prevalent means in order to their defence: How much more doth it behove the Christian, both in point of duty and prudence, to take the same course in his spiritual war against principalities and powers! For the saints' graces, when best trained and exercised, are, without prayer, far less able to stand against satan, than they, with their military preparation, were to repel the force of men like themselves. *Watch and pray,* saith our Saviour, *lest you enter into temptation,* Mat. xxvi. 41. The not keeping this pass, gave the enemy, satan, a fair occasion to come in upon them, for we see, not taking Christ's counsel, they were all (though holy men) shamefully foiled. Most of them shifted for themselves

selves by a cowardly flight (while they left their Lord in his enemies' hands): and he that thought to shew more courage than his fellows, at last came off with deeper guilt and shame than them all, by denying his master, who was even then owning him in the face of death, yea, his Father's wrath. And it is observable, that as they were led into temptation through their own neglect of prayer, so they were rescued and led out of it again by Christ's prayer, which he mercifully laid in before-hand for them, Luke xxii. 32. *I have prayed that thy faith fail not.* But that which above all commends this duty to us, is Christ's own practice, who, besides his constant exercise in it, did upon any great undertaking (wherein he was to meet opposition from satan and his instruments) much more abound in it. At his baptism, being now to enter the stage of his public ministry, and to make his way thereunto through the fierce and furious assaults of satan, with whom he was to grapple, as it were, hand to hand after his forty days solitude, we find him at prayer, Luke iii. 21. which prayer had a present answer, heaven opening, and the spirit descending on him, with this voice, saying, *Thou art my well beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased,* ver. 22. And now Christ marcheth forth undaunted to meet his enemy, who waited for him in the wilderness. Again, when he intended to commission his apostles, and send them forth to preach the gospel, which he knew would bring the lion fell and mad out of his den, as also derive the world's wrath upon those his messengers; he first sets his disciples on praying, Mat. ix. 38. and then spends the whole night himself in the same work before their mission, Luke vi. 12. But above all, when he was to fight his last battle with the prince of this world, and also conflict with the wrath of his Father, now armed against him, and ready to be poured upon him for man's sin (whose cause he had espoused), on the success of which great undertaking depended the saving or losing his mediatory kingdom, O how then did he bestir himself in prayer! It is said, *He prayed more earnestly:* as a wrestler that strains every vein in his body; so he put forth his whole might, *with strong cries and tears to him that was able to save him from death,* Heb. v. 7. and was heard, so that he won the field, though himself slain upon the place; the spoils of which glorious victory believers do now divide, and shall enjoy to all eternity.—And what is the English of all this, but to shew us both the necessity, and prevalency of prayer? Without this, no victory to be had, though we have our armour, but this with that will make us conquerors over all.

SECT. II.—First, Now to proceed and shew why prayer is so necessary a means, with our other armour, for our defence.

The first reason is taken from the co-ordination of this duty with all

all other means for the christian's defence, and that by divine appointment. He that bids us *take the girdle of truth, breast-plate of righteousness, &c.* commands also not to neglect this duty.—Now what God joins we must not sever. The efficacy of coordinate means lies in their conjunction. The force of an army lies not in this troop or in that one regiment, but in all the parts in a body. And if any single troop or company shall presume to fight the enemy alone, what can they expect but to be routed by the enemy, and punished by their general also? Let not any say, they use this means and that; if any one be willingly neglected, the golden chain of obedience is broke: and *Bonum non nisi ex integris.* As to a good action there is required a concurrence of all the several ingredients and causes: so to make a good christian, there is required a conscientious care to use all appointed means: He must follow the Lord fully, not to make here a balk, and there a furrow. It is not the least of satan's policy to get between one duty and another, that the man may not unite his forces, and be uniform in his endeavour. Few so bad as to use no means, and not many so faithful to God and themselves as conscientiously to use all. One, he pretends to sincerity, and dares appeal to God that he means well, and his heart is good; but for the breast-plate of righteousness it is too heavy and cumbersome for him to wear. Another seems very just and righteous, so that he would not wrong his neighbour, no not of one penny to gain many pounds; but as for faith in Christ, this he never looks after. A third boasts of his faith and hope, as if he did not doubt of his salvation; but as for the word of God, that should beget and increase it, he cares not how seldom he looks on it at home, or hears it in the public. And a fourth, he hath this to say for himself, that he is a constant hearer, his seat at church is seldom found empty, and at home the bible is often in his hands; but as for prayer, his closet, could it speak, would bear witness against him, that he seldom or never performs it. This half-doing will prove many a soul's whole undoing. Samuel asked Jesse, *Are here all thy children?* though but a stripling wanting, he must be sent for, before he will sit down: So may I say to many that are very busy and forward in some particular duties and means, is here all that God hath given thee in charge? if but one be wanting, God's blessing will be wanting also: And as that son was wanting of Jesse's, which God did intend to set the crown upon; so that duty and means which is most neglected, we have cause to think is the means which God would especially crown with his blessing upon our faithful endeavour.

CHAP. II.

The Influence Prayer hath on all the Graces of a Saint shewn; and is the second Reason of the Point.

2. THE second is taken from the influence that prayer hath upon all our graces, and that in a double respect. It will help to evidence the truth of grace, and also advance its growth.

SECT. I.—First, This duty frequently and spiritually performed, will be a means to evidence the truth of our graces. And this is of no small importance to the christian, when he hath to do with the tempter; for that which he mainly drives at, is to bring the christian into a suspicion of himself, as to the work of grace in him, thereby to overturn the very foundation of his hope, and put him to a stand in his endeavours. He indeed will have little list to go on, that fears he is not in his right way. I have heard that politicians can make use of a state-lie, though the credit of it lasts but a little while, for great advantage to their designs. And he that learns them this art, makes much more use of it himself to further his designs against the christian. Because he could not keep Christ in the grave, therefore he raiseth a lie, to hinder the belief of his resurrection in the world. And when he cannot hinder the protection of grace, he mis-reports the work to the christian, as if all were but a cheat put upon him by his own deceitful heart, which the poor creature is prone enough, God knows, to believe; and so though the fear be false and groundless, yet being believed, produceth as sad a confusion to his thoughts, and distress to his spirit, as if it were true. Jacob could not have mourned more if Joseph had indeed been slain, than he did when there was no such matter: Nor could a wicked wretch easily endure more terror and horror, than some precious saints have felt, for the time that satan's false report (slandering the truth of their grace) hath found credit with them.

Now in prayer the christian stands at great advantage to find out the truth of his state, and that upon a double account.

First, God doth commonly take this season, when his people are pouring out their souls to him, to open his heart to them, and to give his testimony both to their persons and graces. God hath his sealing hours, in which his spirit comes and bears witness to his children's state and grace: and this of prayer is a principal one. Where was it that God so marvellously dignified, and if I may so say, knighted Jacob with that new title of honour, *Thou shalt be called Israel*, but in the field of prayer? What was the happy hour in which the angel knocked at Daniel's door to let him know how God loved him? was it not when he was knock-

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ing at heaven-door by his prayer? Dan. x. 23. *At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee, for thou art greatly beloved.* When got the woman of Canaan the sight of her faith, not only that it was true, but also strong? *O woman, great is thy faith!* but when her heart was carried forth so vehemently in prayer? Yea Christ himself heard that miraculous voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son*, when he was lifting up his in prayer to heaven, Luke iii. 21.

Secondly, The duty of prayer affords a demonstrative argument for the truth of that soul's grace which spiritually performs it.—The spirit of God, when he testifies to the truth of a saint's grace, useth to join issue with the saint's own spirit, Rom. viii. 16. *The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.* Now the testimony which the christian's own spirit gives for him, is taken from those vital acts of the new creature that operate in him: such as sincerity, godly sorrow for sin, love of holiness, and other of this nature are. Now no way do these and other graces more sensibly discover themselves to the christian's view, than in prayer. Here sincerity shews itself in the christian's plain heartedness to confess all his sins freely without extorting, and nakedly without extenuation or reservation; when there is no false box in the cabinet of the soul to lock up a darling sin in, holy David, Psal. xxxii. having, *ver.* 1. pronounced him *blessed that had no sin imputed to him, and in whose spirit there is no guile; ver.* 5. gives this instance of his own sincerity, that he *acknowledged his sin, and did not hide his iniquity;* as also how well he sped thereby, *And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* Again, here doth the christian give vent to his heart, aking with inward grief for sin. Prayer is the channel into which godly sorrow pours forth itself, and runs down in brinish tears, while the christian is accusing himself of, and judging himself for his abominations with deep shame and self-abhorrency. In a word, here the soul's love to holiness flames forth in his fervent vehement desires and requests for grace that can bear no denial, but even breaks for the longing it hath to it. Thus we see a spirit of prayer is both an argument of true grace, and a means to draw out that grace into act, whereby its truth may be the better exposed to view. *A spirit of grace and of supplication*, are both joined together, Zech. xii. 10. The latter doth indicate the former. What is prayer, but the breathing forth of that grace which is breathed into the soul by the holy spirit? When God breathed into man the breath of life, he became a living soul: so when God breathes into the creature the breath of spiritual life, it becomes a praying soul: *Behold he prayeth*, saith God of Paul to Ananias, Acts ix. 11. As if he had said, Be not afraid of him, he is an honest soul, thou mayest trust him, for he prays. Praying is the same to the new creature, as crying is to the

natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.

SECT. II.—Secondly, As it is a means to evidence, so to increase grace. The praying Christian is the thriving Christian; whereas he that is unfrequent, or slothful in praying, is a waster. He is like one that lives at great expence, and drives little or no trade to bring wherewithal to maintain it.

Now prayer helps towards the increase and growth of grace, these two ways:

First, As it draws the habits of grace into act, and exerciseth them. Now as exercise brings a double benefit to the body, so this to the soul.

First, Exercise doth help to digest or breathe forth those humours that clog the spirits. One that stirs little, we see, grows pursy, and is soon choaked up with phlegm, which exercise clears the body of. Prayer is the saint's exercise-field, where his graces are breathed; it is as the wind to the air to sweep the soul; as bellows to the fire, which clears the coals of those ashes that smother them. The Christian, while in this world, lives but in an unwholesome climate; one while the delights of it deaden and dull his love to Christ, another while the trouble he meets in it damps his faith on the promise: How now should the poor Christian get out of these his distempers, had he not a throne of grace to resort to, where if once his soul be in a melting frame, he (like one laid in a kindly sweat) soon breathes out the malignity of his disease, and comes into his right temper again? How oft do we find the holy prophet, when he first kneels down to pray, full of fears and doubts, who, yet before he and the duty part, grows into a sweet familiarity with God, and repose in his own spirit? Psal. xiii. 1. He begins his prayer, as if it were come to that pass that he thought God would never give him a kind look more, *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?* But by that time he hath exercised himself a little in duty, his distemper wears off, the mists scatter, and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength, ver. 5. *I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation, I will sing unto the Lord.* Thus his faith lays the cloth, expecting a feast ere long to be set on; he that even now questioned whether he should ever hear good news from heaven, is so strong in faith, as to make himself merry with the hopes of that mercy, which he is assured will come at last. Abraham began with *fifty*, but his faith got ground on God every step, till he brought down the price of their lives to *ten*.

Secondly, Exercise whets the appetite to that food which must be taken before strength can be got; and *causa causæ est causa causati.*

causati. The hone that sets an edge on the husbandman's scythe, helps him to mow the grass. None comes so sharp set to the word (which is the saint's food to strengthen his grace) as the Christian that takes prayer in his way to the ordinance. The stronger natural heat is, the better stomach the man hath to his meat; love in the soul is what natural heat is in the body; the more the soul loves the word, the more craving it is after it.—Now as exercise stirs up the natural heat of the body, so prayer excites this spiritual heat of love in the saint's bosom to the word. Cornelius is an excellent instance for it; we find him hard at prayer in his house, when behold a vision that bids him send for Peter, who should preach the gospel to him; a happy reward for his devotion. Now see what a sharp appetite this praying soul hath to the word: he upon this presently posts away messengers for Peter, and before he comes, gathers an assembly together (no doubt all of his friends that he could get) there he sits with a longing heart waiting for the preacher: As soon as ever he sees his face, he falls down at his feet, receiving him with that reverence and respect as if he had been an angel dropt out of heaven; presently he sets Peter to work, though some may think he passed good manners in putting him to labour after so long a journey, before he had refreshed him with some collation or other; but the good man was so hungry to hear the message he brought, that he could not well pacify his soul to stay any longer, and like a man truly hunger-bit, he is ready to catch at any truth (though never so bitter) which shall be set before him, Acts x. 33. *Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* And when the sermon is done, so savoury and sweet was the meal, that he is loth to think of parting with Peter before he gets more from him, and therefore beseeches him to stay some days with him; one sermon did but make his teeth water for another. O how unlike are they who come reeking out of the world to a sermon, to Cornelius that riseth from prayer to wait for the preacher!

SECT. III.—Secondly, Prayer helps our graces, as it sets the soul nigh to God; in prayer we are said *to draw near to God*, James iv. 8. *To come before his presence*, Psal. cx. In it *we have access to the Father*, Eph. ii. As one that brings a petition to a prince, is called into his presence-chamber; one of the nearest approaches to God which the creature is capable of on this side heaven, which was signified by the *incense altar*, that stood so high even within the veil; prayer is called *the throne of grace;* we come in prayer to the throne of God, and put our petition into the very hand of God, as he sits on his throne in all his royalty. Now, as prayer is so near an approach to God, it hath a double influence on the growth of the saint's grace.

First, By this near access to God, the soul is put the more into an holy awe and fear of that pure and piercing eye of God, which he sees looking on him; it is true God is ever near us, pray or not pray, we cannot rid ourselves of his presence; but never hath the soul such apprehensions of his presence, as when it is set before God in prayer. Now the soul speaks to God, as it were, mouth to mouth; and considering how holy that Majesty is with whom he hath to do in prayer, he must needs reverence and tremble before him. Now the natural issue of this holy fear, what can it be but a care to approve itself to God? And this care cherishes every grace; they are carried in its arms, as the child in its nurse's; it keeps the girdle of truth buckled close about his loins. Oh, saith the soul, I must either leave praying, or leave doubling and juggling with God by hypocrisy. It will strengthen the breast-plate of holiness; it is not possible that a Christian should walk loosely all day, and be free and familiar with God at night. He that waits on the person of a prince, will be careful to carry nothing about him that should be offensive to his eye, yea, afraid lest any thing should come to his ear, that should bring him under a cloud in his prince's thoughts, and remove him from his place about him; and courtiers have those that will be always undermining them, if they can. The Christian wants not such an adversary; for satan is at his right hand at every miscarriage, to accuse him unto God, saying, This is your favourite, though he be so devout in prayer, he can do this or that, when the duty is over; and therefore if any in the world have a tie upon them more than others to walk exactly, it is they that minister before the Lord in this duty. Princes are more curious of their attendants, than of others at further distance from them. When David shewed some distraction of mind before king Achish, he bids, *Away with him; have I need of madmen, that you bring such a one into my presence?* And does a poor mortal man, that sits on a throne of dust only heaped up, and raised a little above his fellows, take such state on him, as not to bear the discomposure of any before him? How much less will the great God (though he wink for a time at the foul sins of others) brook any unholy behaviour in those that wait so nigh upon him! This, no doubt, made Cain run so fast from the presence of God, because he knew that there was no standing so nigh God with such an unholy heart as he carried in his bosom.

Secondly, By the soul's near access to God in prayer, it receives sweet influences of grace from God. All grace comes from the God of grace; not only the first seed of grace, but its growth and increase; and God usually sheds forth his grace in a way of communion with his people. Now by prayer the Christian is led into most intimate communion with God, and from communion

munion follows communication. As the warmth the chicken finds by sitting under the hen's wings cherisheth it, so are the saints' graces enlivened and strengthened by the sweet influences they receive from this close communion with God. The Christian is compared to a tree, Psal. i. and those trees flourish most, and bear the sweetest fruit, which stand most in the sun. The praying Christian is (as they say of the Rhodians) *in sole positus:* he stands nigh to God, and hath God nigh to him in all that he calls upon him for. And therefore you may expect his fruit to be sweet and ripe, when another that stands, as it were, in the shade, and at a distance from God, (through neglect of, or infrequency in this duty) will have little fruit found on his branches, and that but green and sour. *Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing,* Psalm xcii.

CHAP. III.

Prayer's Prevalency with God. The Third Reason given of the Point.

THIRDLY, The third reason why the Christian should join prayer to all other means, is taken from the great prevalency prayer hath with God. He will do no great matter for a saint without prayer, and nothing is too great for him to do at his request. Prayer, like Jonathan's bow (when duly qualified as to the person and act), never returns empty. Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty, as the praying saint. Some prayers, indeed, have a longer voyage than others; but then they come with the richer lading at last into the port. In trading, he gets most by his commodity that can forbear his money longest. So does the Christian that can with most patience stay for a return of his prayer: such a soul shall never be ashamed of his waiting. The promise is as an *assuring-office* to secure him his adventure, 1 John iii. 22. O who can express the powerful oratory of a believer's prayer! *Vocula Pater formaliter dicta in corde, est eloquentia, quam Demosthenes, Cicero, et eloquentissimi in mundo nunquam possunt exprimere.* Luther. This little word, *Father*, lisped forth in prayer by a child of God, exceeds the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and all other so famed orators in the world. We read of *taking heaven by force*, Mat. xi. 12. If ever this

may be said to be done, it is in prayer. *Cœlum tundimus & misericordium extorquemus*, saith Tertullian. We knock at heaven, and the merciful heart of God flies open, which we bring away with us. And in the same apology he speaks of Christians, how they went to pray, *As an army doth to besiege a town, and take it by storm: Coimus in cœtum & congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manufacta precationibus ambiamus orantes;* and then adds, *Hæc vis Deo grata est;* This holy violence we offer to God in prayer, is very pleasing to him. Surely if it were not, he would neither help the Christian so in the work, nor reward him for it when it is done. Whereas he doth both. He helped Jacob to overcome; Hos. xii. 3. *By his strength he had power with God:* That is, not by his own, but the strength he had from God. And then he puts honour upon him for the victory, Gen. xxxii. 28. *Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel, for as a Prince thou hast power with God and men, and hast prevailed.* It were easy here to expatiate into a large history of the great exploits which prayer is renowned for in holy writ, Jam. v. 17. Isa. xxxvii. Dan. ii. 18. 2 Sam. xv. 31. Esther iv. 16. Acts xii. 5. John xi. 41. Jonah ii. 2. Josh. x. 12. 14. 2 Kings xx. 10. Psalm cvi. 23. Ezek. xxii. 30. This is the key that hath *opened and again shut heaven.* It hath vanquished mighty armies; and unlocked such secrets, as passed the skill of the very devil himself to find out. It hath strangled desperate plots in the very womb wherein they were conceived; and made those engines of cruelty prepared against the saints, recoil upon the inventors of them; so that they have inherited the gallows which they did set up for others. At the knock of prayer, prison-doors have opened, the grave hath delivered up its dead, and the sea's leviathan, not able to digest his prey, hath been made to vomit it up again. It hath stopped the sun's chariot in the heavens, yea, made it to go back. And that which surpasseth all, it hath taken hold of the Almighty, when on his full march against persons and people, and hath put him to a merciful retreat. Indeed by the power prayer hath with God, it comes to prevail over all the rest. He that hath a key to God's heart, cannot be shut out, or stopped at the creature's door. Now prayer moves God and overcomes him, not by causing any change in the divine will, and making God to take up new thoughts of doing that for his people which he did not before intend. No, God is immutable; and what good he doth in time for his people, he purposed before any time was. But prayer is said to move and overcome God, because he then gives what from eternity he purposed to give upon their praying to him. For when God decreed what he would do for his saints, he also purposed that they should pray for the same. *Yet will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for*

for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Prayer's midwifery shall be used to deliver the mercies God purposeth and promiseth. Hezekiah understood this when he calls the prophet to the church's labour, and bids, *Because the children* (that is, deliverance) *stuck in her birth, that he should therefore lift up a prayer*, Isaiah xxxvii. 4. And when Daniel had found the full reckoning of the promise, how long it had to go with the deliverance promised for their return from captivity, perceiving it hastened, he therefore falls hard to prayer, knowing God's purpose to give, doth not discharge us from our duty to ask, Dan. ix. 3.

CHAP. IV.

Wherein this Question is answered, Why God requires Prayer for that which he hath promised before to give?

Quest. BUT why doth God impose this upon the saints, that they should pray for what he hath purposed and promised to give?

Answ. First, That they may be conformable to Christ. The design of God is to make every saint like Christ: this was resolved from eternity, Rom. viii. 29. Now, as the limner looks on the person whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that may be; so doth God look on Christ as the archetype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in grace, and in glory: Yet so, that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer, because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head; yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore so shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree. An image cut in clay, cannot be so exact as that which is engraved in gold. Now, as in other things, so in this, our conformity to Christ appears; that as the promises made to him were performed upon his prayer to his Father; so promises made to his saints, are given to them in the same way of prayer. *Ask of me*, (saith God to his Son), *and I will give thee*, Psal. ii. And the apostle tells us, *Ye have not, because ye ask not.* God hath promised support to Christ in all his conflicts; Isaiah xlii. 1. *Behold my servant whom I uphold.* Yet he prays *with strong cries and tears*, when his feet stood within the shadow of death. A seed is promised to him, and victory over his enemies; yet for both these he is at prayer now in heaven. Christ towards us acts as a king; but towards his Father

Father as a priest. All he speaks to God is on his knee, by prayer and intercession. In like manner the saints; the promise makes them kings over their lusts, conquerors over their enemies; but it makes them priests towards God, by prayer humbly to sue out those great things given in the promise.

Secondly, That God may give the good things of the promise with safety to his honour. Secure God but his glory, and the saint may have what he will. The very life of God is bound up in his glory. The creature's honour is not intrinsical to his being. A prince is a man, when his crown and kingdom are gone; but God cannot be a God, except he be glorious; neither can he be glorious, unless he be holy, just, merciful, and faithful, &c. Now that this his glory may be seen and displayed, is the great end he propounds, both in making, and ordering of the world, Prov. xvi. 4. *He made all things for himself.* If there were any one occurrence in the world, which could be no way reducible to the glory of God, it would make the being of a deity to be questioned. But the all-wise God hath so made, and doth so order all his creatures with their actions, that the manifestation of his glory is the result of all. Indeed he forceth it from some, and takes it by distress, as princes do their taxes from disobedient subjects. Thus the very *wrath of his enemies shall praise him*, Psal. lxxvi. 10. But he expects the saints should be active instruments to glorify him, and, like loyal loving subjects, pay him the tribute of his praise freely, with acclamations of joy and gratitude: Which that they may do, he issueth out his mercies in such a way, as may best suit with this their duty. And that is, to give the good things he hath purposed and promised to them, upon their humble address in prayer to him.

Now two ways the glory of God is secured by this means.

First, The saints in the very duty of prayer (when he performs it in a qualified manner) doth highly glorify God. Prayer, as it is *medium gratiæ*, a channel of grace, for the conveying and deriving blessings from God, the fountain, into the cistern of our bosoms: So it is *medium cultus*, a means of worship, whereby we are to do our homage to God, and give him the glory of his power. Prayer is an humble appeal from our impotency to God's omnipotence. None begs that at another door, which he can pleasure himself with at home. And if we thought not God able, we would go to another, not to him. We give him the glory of his sovereignty and dominion, and acknowledge that he is not only able to procure for us what we ask, but can give us a right to, and the blessing of what he gives. Therefore Christ closeth his prayer with, *Thine is the kingdom, power, and glory*, &c. as a reason why we direct our prayers to God: Because he alone is the sovereign Lord that can invest us in, and give us title to

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an enjoyment. So that it is high treason against the crown and dignity of God, when we either attempt to possess ourselves of any enjoyment without praying to him; or when we pray religiously to any other besides him. By the first, we usurp his sovereignty ourselves, in their language, Jer. ii. 31. *We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.* And by the second, we give away his kingdom and sovereignty to another. This was the devil's drift when he would have had Christ fall down and worship him; that thereby he might acknowledge him to have the rule of the world. *Again*, by prayer, we give him *the glory of his free-mercy*. Men demand a debt, but beg an alms. When we pray, we renounce merit. See them opposed, Job ix. 15. *Whom though I were righteous, yet would I not answer; but I would make supplication to my judge.* We might shew the same in all the other attributes: But this taste from a few might suffice. And as God, essentially considered, receives by prayer an acknowledgment of his deity: so every person in the sacred trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in prayer are honoured. By directing our prayers to God the Father, we honour him as the source and fountain of all grace and mercy. We honour the Son, in presenting our prayers in his name to the Father, thereby acknowledging him the purchaser of the mercies we beg. And the Holy Ghost, he receives the honour of that assistance which we acknowledge to receive from him for the duty of prayer. For as we pray to the Father through the Son, so by the help of the Spirit.

Secondly, As God is honoured in the very act and exercise of this duty duly qualified; so by it the Christian is deeply engaged, and also sweetly disposed to praise God for, and glorify him with the mercies he obtains by prayer.

First, Prayer engageth to this. In prayer, we do not only beg mercy of God, but vow praise to God for the mercies we beg.—Prayers are called vows, Psalm lxi. 5. *O God, thou hast heard my vows.* That is, my prayers, in which I solemnly vowed praise for the deliverance I begged. It is no prayer where no vow is included. We must not think to bind God, and leave ourselves free. God ties himself in the promise to help us; but the condition of the obligation on our part is, that we will glorify him: and upon no other terms doth God give us leave to ask any mercy at his hands. *Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*, Psal. l. 15. Now, what a strong tie doth this lay upon the praying Christian's heart, to use the mercies he receives, holily, and to wear with thankfulness what he wins by prayer! The Christian who would be loth to be taken in a lie to man, will much more fear to be found a liar to

to God: *Surely they are my people* (saith God), *children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour*, Isa. lxiii. 8.

Secondly, Prayer is a means to dispose the heart to praise. Prayer and praise, like the symbolical qualities in the elements, are soon resolved each into the other. When David begins a psalm with prayer, he commonly ends with praise: From whence things have their original, thither they return: From the sea the river water comes, and no mountains can hinder, but back again to sea it will go. That spirit which leads the soul out of itself to God for supply, will direct it to the same God with his praise. We do not use to borrow money of one man, and pay it to another. If God hath been thy strength, surely thou wilt make him thy song. The thief comes not to thank a man for what he steals out of his yard. And I as little wonder that they do not glorify God for or with his mercies, who did not ask his leave by prayer for them. What men do by themselves, they ascribe to themselves. Mercies ill got, are commonly as ill spent: Because they are not sanctified to them, and so become fuel to feed their lusts. Hence it is, the more enjoyments they have, the more proud and unthankful they are. But by prayer the Christian's enjoyments are sanctified, and the flatulency of them which puffs up others into pride, is corrected; and the same mercies received by prayer, become nourishment to the saint's grace, that putrify and turn to noisome lusts in the prayerless sinner.

Thirdly, God will have his people pray for what he hath purposed and promised, to shew the great delight he takes in their prayers. As a father, though he can send to his son (who lives abroad) the money he hath promised for his maintenance, yet lets him not have it, except he comes over at set times for it. And why? Not to trouble his son, but delight himself in his son's company. God takes such content in the company of his praying saints, that to prevent all strangeness on their part, he orders it so, that they cannot neglect a duty, but they shall lose something by it. *Ye have not, because you ask not.* And the more they abound in prayer, the more they shall with blessings. The oftener Joash had smote upon the ground, the fuller had his victory over Syria been. As the arrows of prayer are, that we shoot to heaven, so will the returns of mercy from thence be. Yet must it not be imputed to any lothness in God to give, that he makes them pray often and long before the mercy comes, but rather to the content he takes in our prayers; he doth all this on a design to draw out the graces of his spirit in his children; the voice and language of which in prayer, makes most sweet melody in the ear of God. The truth is, we are in this too like musicians playing under our window; they play while the money is thrown out to them, and then their pipes are put up. And were

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our wants so supplied by the answer of one prayer, that we did not suddenly need a new recruit, we would be gone, and God should not hear of us in haste.

CHAP. V.

A sharp Reproof to all Prayerless Souls: With the dismal State that such are in, shewn.

Use 1. A Word to those who live in the total neglect of this duty, that are prayerless creatures. Such ruins of mankind there are to be found, who pass their wretched days like so many swine, they never look up to heaven, till God lays them on their back; nor are heard to cry in prayer, till his knife is at their throat. What shall I say to these giants, and sons of the earth, that have renounced their allegiance to the God of heaven! These kine of Bashan, who like so many metamorphosed Nebuchadnezzars, have lost the heart of a man, and live as like very brutes, as the beasts themselves, who, while they feed, take no notice of him that clothes the field with grass for them! Can I hope they will hear man, who will not acknowledge the God of heaven, by praying to him! Surely your case is deplored: What! not pray! Can you do less, than by this homage to own God for your maker? Or less for your own souls, than to beg their life of God, whose hand of justice is lift up against you? Are you resolved thus to throw yourselves into the devil's mouth, without so much as striking one stroke for your defence! If God had required a greater matter at your hands than this, the salvation of your souls would have deserved it: And will you stick at this! God does not put us to the cost of laying down the price of our ransom, no, not so much as to pay our prison fees; only he bids thee pray, and he will pay: *Their souls shall live that seek the Lord*, Psal. lxix. 32. Oh what salt and vinegar will this pour into thy wounds, when in hell thy conscience shall fly in thy face, and tell thee thou hadst not been there, if thou wouldst in time have humbled thy soul before God, and sought his favour in that way which cost Christ his blood to procure; either thou must be dispossessed of this dumb devil, or undoubtedly it will be thy damnation! And who dies with less pity, than that malefactor, that stouts it before the judge, and will not so much as down on his knees, or open his mouth to cry for mercy, though the judge on purpose stays to pronounce the sentence, and break up the court, to see whether his stomach will fall, and his proud spirit stoop

stoop to ask his life at his hands! You know how angry Pilate was, when Christ was silent, John xix. 10. *Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?* Though alas, poor creature, (as Christ told him), he could do nothing for or against him; and therefore Christ neither feared him, nor owed him so much service as to bestow a word upon him. The warrant for Christ's death was sealed in heaven, and he, with the rest of Christ's enraged enemies, were but God's servants to do the execution according to the determinate counsel of God. But how much more reason hath the great God to be provoked by this irreligion, and say, Wilt thou not speak to me? Pray to me? Dost thou not know I have power to save or damn? To deliver thee to the tormentor, or keep thee out of his hands? Or dost thou look that God is bound to save thee, whether pray or not pray? If he doth (I promise you), he shall do more for thee than for others; yea, than for his own Son, *who made strong cries and supplications to be saved by him.* God hath laid the method of salvation, and think not that he will alter it, and so make a blot in the counsel of his will for thy pleasure: What he hath written, he hath written; and it shall not be reversed: Yea, though others should be so kind as out of pity to thy soul to pray for thee, yet if thou beest thyself a prayerless creature, thou shalt die the death. If they were Noah, Samuel, and Daniel, that stood up to beg thy life, they shall not be heard for thee. Proxy prayers in this case will not prevail. And therefore when the Israelites came a begging to Samuel for his prayers (which, good man, he easily promised, indeed durst not have forgot them in that, though they had not remembered him of it), mark what caveat he annexeth, 1 Sam. xii. 24. *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart.* As if he had said, do not set me to do that for you, which you will not do for yourselves; it is not all the interest my prayers have in heaven will keep the wrath of God from falling on you, if you be wicked and atheistical: therefore *fear the Lord, and serve him:* That is, pray and obey him.—Fear often denotes the worship of God, Gen. xxxi. God is called the *fear of Isaac;* i. e. the God whom he feared and worshipped: So Jer. x. 7. *Who will not fear thee, thou king of nations?* That is, worship thee, rather than the stocks and stones? Because the worshipping of God results from our reverence and fear we have of him: Christ *was heard in that he feared*, Heb. v. 7. That is, his religious fear expressed in those his strong cries, which he groaned forth to God in his agony. And therefore so long as you are prayerless, you live without the fear of God. And what will not such a wretch dare to do! even any thing that satan shall command him, tho' it be to go to a wizard.

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When Saul had given over enquiring after God, we hear him by and by knocking at the devil's door, and asking counsel of a witch. Oh! take heed of living so near the tempter! If satan might have his wish, surely it would be this, that the creature might live prayerless; for by this he should do the greatest spite possible to God, in that he makes the creature set him at naught in all his attributes, and have the greatest advantage against the sinner himself. Now he hath thee as sure as the thief hath the traveller, when he hath thrown him into a ditch fast bound, and stopped his mouth, that he cannot cry to others for help. In a word, thou art free booty for satan, who may now satisfy his lust upon thee. He that prayeth, invites God into his further acquaintance, and soon shall have it: As we see in Paul, who had Ananias sent from God to him. But he that lives in the neglect of this duty, gives the devil fuller possession of him. Thou art the man of all others most fit for him to make an atheist of. I should not wonder that the devil persuades thee there is no God, who already livest in such defiance against him, as cannot but make the belief of a deity dreadful to thy thoughts. Herod was soon persuaded to cut off John's head, because when he was alive, he so troubled and nettled his conscience. And it is to be feared, thou wilt easily be drawn to attempt the stifling all thoughts of a deity, from whom thy criminous conscience expects to hear nothing that can please thee: Yea, it is probable thou hast too much of the atheist in thee already, or else thou dost not deny God that part of natural worship, which they that know him least give unto him. I am sure the scripture lays this brat of irreligion at the door of atheism, Psalm xiv. 1. *The fool* there would fain persuade himself there is no God; and when he hath got so far the mastery of his conscience as to blot God out of his creed, he then soon leaves him out of his *Pater Noster*, ver. 2.

Quest. But it may be some will ask me, whether I think that any do, where the gospel is preached, neglect prayer on this account of atheism?

Answ. Truly I do; and which is more, I think there are worse atheists to be found under the meridian-light of the gospel, than in the darkest nook in America (where yet this day never broke). As weeds grow rankest in richest grounds, and fruits ripest in hottest climates: So do sins grow to the greatest heighth, where the gospel-sun climbs highest. *Who is blind but my servant? and blind as the Lord's servant?* Isa. xlii. 19. Who such atheists as those that have their eyes put out by the light of the gospel? The poor Indian's little knowledge of a God is for want of light, which may be cured, when it is brought to them: But if a judiciary atheism (as that in gospel

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times and places commonly is) falls upon a soul so rebelling against the light, this is incurable; here the very visive faculty is perished, and the eye bored out.

CHAP. VI.

An Exhortation to the Saints, that they would abound in this Duty.

Use 2. TO the saints; be you provoked to ply this oar more diligently than ever: if this be neglected, an universal decay of all your graces follows. When the ports and havens of a kingdom are blocked up, that the merchants cannot go forth, there follows a damp on all the inland trade, so that an enemy needs not strike a stroke, but only stand still to see them eat up one another. The Psalmist tells us of a *stream which makes glad the city of God*, Psal. xlvi. The promise is this stream, upon which the saints have all their livelihood brought up to their very doors; if this be kept open, satan cannot much distress them, which then is done, when they can send out their prayers on this stream to heaven; but if once this trade be stopped, then they are hard put to it. It is observed of our neighbours the Netherlands, that whereas other nations use to be made poor by war, they have grown rich with it, because with their wars they have enlarged their trade and traffic abroad.—And if thou, Christian, wouldst thrive by all thy temptations, thou must take the same course; whatever thou dost, starve not thy trade with heaven. God hath (to make thee more diligent in this thy duty) so ordered things, that all the treasure of the promise is to be conveyed to thee in this bottom of prayer. This is like the merchant-ship, Prov. xxx. *It brings thy food from afar*. If thy mercies were of the growth of thy own country, thou mightest spare a voyage to heaven: but alas, poor creature, when thou art best laid in, and thy store-house fullest, if no foreign supplies should come unto thee from heaven, how soon wouldst thou be brought, with the poor widow, to eat thy last cake, and die! It was not her little meal in her barrel, nor oil at the bottom of her cruse, but God's blessing multiplying them, that made them hold out so long: So, not thy present grace, strength, or comfort, but God's feeding these with a new spring, that thou must live upon: now cease praying, and the oil of grace will cease running: *Ye have not, because you ask not.* And when the store is spent, the city must yield. As thou wouldst

wouldst not therefore fall into satan's hands, lose not thy interest in God thy best ally, for want of preserving a good correspondence with him at the throne of grace. Now for the better pursuit of this exhortation, some counsel would not be amiss, in order to thy driving this trade of prayer more successfully. Satan, who hath received so many shameful overthrows by the saint's prayers, that he trembles at the force of this great ordinance of heaven: This is the voice, the mighty voice of God in his saints, which shakes those mountaints of pride, divides the flames of their fiery temptations, and makes them cast forth their abortive counsels to their shame and disappointment. *O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Achitophel into foolishness*, 2 Sam. xv. 31. This one prayer made both Achitophel a fool, and him that set him on work also, defeating the wisdom both of man and devil. Satan hath such an impression of dread upon him, from the remembrance of what he hath suffered from the hands of prayer, that he will turn every stone, and try every way to obstruct thee in it. *What do we?* said the Pharisees concerning Christ, *for this man does many miracles; if we let him alone, the Romans will come, and take away both our place and nation.* Satan cannot deny but great wonders have been wrought by prayer. As the spirit of prayer goes up, so his kingdom goes down. It is of the royal seed, he can no more stand before it, than falling Haman before rising Mordecai. And therefore, seeing this is like to do thee such great service against him, it behoves thee the more to defend it from his stratagems. Because the great artillery of an army is so useful to it, and formidable to the enemy, therefore it hath a strong guard set about it.

Now satan's stratagems against prayer, are of three kinds.

First, If he can, he will keep thee from prayer. If that be not feasible,

Secondly, He will strive to interrupt thee in prayer: And,

Thirdly, If that plot takes not, he will labour to hinder the success and return of thy prayer.

CHAP. VII.

Two Stratagems whereby Satan labours to starve the weak Christian from the Duty of Prayer.

FIRST, His first design upon thee will be to keep thee from prayer. To effect which, he wants not his stratagems, many objections that he will start, and discouragements he will throw

in thy way to this duty, hoping that if thou stumblest not at one, yet he may make thee fall by another, and be sick of thy enterprize before thou settest upon it. And which is worst, thou wilt find a party in thy own bosom too ready to listen to what he saith, yea, to take up his arguments, and maintain the dispute against thy engaging in this work. We shall pick a few among many, and put an answer into thy mouth against he comes.

SECT. I.—*Stratagem.* First, What! thou pray! if thou dost, thou wilt but play the hypocrite; and better not pray at all, than never the better! Nay, possibly thy own misgiving heart may suggest the same, or at least so far credit his charge, as to make thee waver in thy thoughts what thou shouldst do, pray or not.

Now to arm thee against this, consider,

First, Thou art *but afraid* thou shouldst play the hypocrite, if pray: but thou wilt certainly prove thyself an atheist, if thou dost not; and that is it which he would have. I hope thou art wiser than to neglect a known duty upon a jealousy thou hast of miscarrying in it; to lie down in a known sin, yea, so broad a one as brands him for an atheist that continues in it, for fear of meeting a lion (and may be but a bugbear) in the way of thy obedience to an indispensable command.

Secondly, Thou art in the less danger of playing the hypocrite, because of thy fear. Some bodily diseases indeed are catched with a fear and fancy. He is most like to have the plague or pox, that fears most he shall have them; but none are so safe from sin, as they that fear the falling into it most. The truth is, I would desire no better argument to prove thee sincere than this, To fear thy hypocrisy.

Believe it, if this be the great trouble of thy soul, the devil hath more reason to fear thy sincerity, than thou thy hypocrisy: And in all likelihood this it is, that makes him to scare thee from prayer, because thou wouldst scare him so much by thy praying. If thou wert an hypocrite, as he pretends, himself would invite thee to it, yea, make a lane for thee, rather than that thou shouldst not come to the work; and when thou art risen from thy knees, he would thank thee for thy pains, because he knows God would not: The hypocrite does him more service than God. You do not believe, sure, that the devil was any great enemy to Jezebel's fasting; nay, I doubt not but he put it into her head, that she might thereby mock both God and man. Her fast was the devil's feast.

But, Thirdly, If thou findest more cause to fear thy playing the hypocrite, than I who am a stranger to thy heart have reason to do, (who indeed can know so well how thy own heart beats as thyself?) I say, if thou fearest this be the sin which is most likely

likely to make a breach upon thee in thy duty, do as Moses, who slew the Egyptian to rescue the Israelite: destroy the sin, that thou mayest rescue thy soul from the neglect of duty. Thou hast a very fair advantage by the intelligence God graciously gives thee, whence thy danger is most likely to come, of falling on thy enemy, and taking the fuller revenge on him, before thou settest about the work of prayer. Get but thy heart into a hatred of this odious sin, and fixed resolution against it, and with God's blessing it shall neither be able to hurt thee, nor hinder thy prayer from finding welcome with God.

SECT. II.—*Stratagem.* Secondly, O but, saith satan, thou hast no gifts for prayer, leave that for them that can perform this duty after a better fashion.

The defensative. What meanest thou by gifts? If a rolling flowing tongue, which some have, whereby they are able on a sudden, with a long continued discourse, to run over all the heads of prayer in a clear method, and clothe every petition with apt and moving expressions; we will suppose thou hast not this gift, but God forbid that the want of this should keep thee from praying, or make thee go the less comfortably to the duty. The want of these shew only thou hast not so good a head, but doth not the least hinder thy heart to be as gracious as theirs: And better of the two, that the defect should be found in thy head, than in thy heart. Thy invention indeed in prayer by this will be more barren, but thy heart may be as fruitful over the few broken disjointed sentences that by piece-meal fall from thee, as theirs with their eloquent oration. Thy language will not be so trim and gaudy, but thy soul and spirit may be as sound, yea, more upright than many of those will be found, who charm the ears of those that join with them, by the music their words make. It is possible a man may have a rotten body under a gorgeous suit; and, *sub hac purpura lingua pannosam conscientiam*, under this bravery of language a poor ragged conscience. Who had not rather be the healthful man in plain clothes, than unsound and diseased, under rich apparel? Sincere with mean gifts, rather than rotten-hearted with raised parts. We do not count him the best patriot in the Parliament-house, that plays the orator, and makes more rhetorical speeches than others, but he that takes with the best side, and whose vote is sure not to be wanting to carry on a righteous cause. It is not the rhetoric of the tongue, but the hearty amen, which the sincere soul seals every holy request withal, that God values; and this thy honest heart will help thee to do; which his head cannot do for him, that wants this sincerity. It is not the fairness of the hand that gives the force to the bond, but the person whose hand and seal it is; if it could, a scrivener might make all the country his debtors. Gifts may make a fair

writing (which the hypocrite can do), but faith and sincerity make a valid prayer; and this alone can lay claim to the good things of the promise. In a word, sincere soul, for so I take thee to be, and if such, though thou hast not these praying gifts as others, yet thou hast as much interest in Christ, *the unspeakable gift*, 2 Cor. ix. as any of them all. And for thy everlasting encouragement know, it is not those gifts in them, but this gift of God to thee and all believers, which is the key that must open God's heart, if any mercy be got thence: yea, this gift must sanctify their glittering gifts, as the altar did the gold upon it, or else they will be an abomination to the Lord.

CHAP. VIII.

Satan's Policy to keep a Soul from this Duty, upon a Pretence of present Indisposition of Body.

Strat. THIRDLY, Satan and the flesh too have their dilatory excuses to take thee off thy duty, when thy stated usual time comes about for the performance of it. Dost thou never, Christian, when thou art addressing thyself to the throne of grace, hear satan and thy flesh whispering in thine ear, Christian, what art thou going to do? This is not a fit time for thy praying; stay for a more convenient season. Here the devil seems modest: He saith not, pray not at all, but not now: Not dissolve, but adjourn the court to a fitter time.

Ans. Now beware, Christian, thy foot is near a snare; if thou takest the devil's counsel, and waitest for his convenient season, may be it will prove like Felix's convenient season for calling Paul to a further hearing, which, for ought we find, never came about. When the flesh or satan beg time of thee, it is to steal time from thee. They put thee off duty at one time, on a design to shut thee out at last from this duty at any time. The devil is a cunning sophister, he knows a modest beggar may sooner obtain the little he asks, than he that saucily asks that which carries more unreasonableness in the request. Jephtha, who yielded to his daughter's desire for a few months' reprieve, would, 'tis like, not have heard her, had she begged a full release from her father's vow. A gracious soul is under a vow to call upon God; satan knows such a notion would be flung back with the saint's abhorrency upon his face, should he at the first dash bid him never pray more, and wholly leave his acquaintance with God, therefore he would seem very willing he should pray: Aye! by all means,

means, said he, I would not have you turn your back on your best friend, but now is not so fit a season.

Two fair pleas satan hath to cheat the Christian of his present season and opportunity for prayer.

The Christian's present indisposition to pray; or some worldly business that then stays to be dispatched.

First, From his present indisposition to pray. Stay, Christian, saith the tempter, till thou art in a better temper for duty, and thou wilt pray to more purpose. Better not write than scribble; leave the work undone, than to go about it when thy hand is out.

Now there is a double indisposition, which both satan and the flesh make use of to colour their pretence with.

First, Indisposition of body: Some distemper lies at present on that; and scripture, say these, tell thee, God loves mercy rather than sacrifice. And it cannot be denied but the scripture will reach as far as the body, for God's commands are not cruel to it.

Ans. But to help thee out of this snare, tell me plainly, How great is thy distemper of body? perhaps thou art not so ill, but thou canst go about thy worldly business, tho' with some groans, and complaints in the same: But when thou shouldst pray, then thy head aches and shoots more than before. Art thou well enough to go into thy shop, and not to pray in thy closet? Canst thou waddle so far as to the market, and not pray at home? Canst thou overcome thy distemper so far as to traffic with the world, and not to trade with heaven? Surely all is not right; God is but little beholden to thee: May not God say, I deserve thy company, as well as the world? But suppose thou beest right down sick, and quite laid up from meddling in thy worldly employments, yet will this excuse thee from visiting the throne of grace? God takes thee out of the shop to shew thee the way into the closet: He knocks thee off thy worldly trade, that thou mayest follow thy heavenly the more close. Thou art not, indeed, able to pray in a continued discourse, as in health; neither doth God expect it. Here that scripture, which the devil would have thee abuse, is pat and suitable to thy present state. *God loves mercy rather than sacrifice.* Yet now, if ever, is the time for thee to shoot those *jacula præcatoria*, darts of ejaculatory prayer to God. When our body breathes shortest, it breathes quickest and oftenest. Though thou canst not pray long, yet thou mayest pray much in these pathetical sallies of thy soul to heaven. The Christian should have his quiver full of these arrows, which, though short, go with a force. Christ never prayed more earnestly than in his agony: which prayer was of this nature, *Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; ne-*

vertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt, Mat. xxvi. 39. And after a little pause (for nature to take some breath, by reason of that unspeakable burthen which then lay upon it), he shoots the same dart again to heaven thrice one after another, ver. 44.

In a word, Christian, though thou canst not pray as thou were wont, yet thou canst desire others to pray for thee and with thee: We are bid to send for the elders, yea, and beg prayers of others too. So pitiful is God to us, that when, through our own weakness, we are disabled from delivering our own conceptions in prayer, that then we may bring forth (as Leah) on other knees; when we cannot go ourselves as we were wont to the work, we may be carried on the shoulders of their prayers, and fly on the wings of their faith, to heaven.

CHAP. IX.

Satan's Stratagem to keep the Christian from Prayer, upon Pretence of present Indisposition of Heart.

SECONDLY, Oh but, thou mayest say, 'Tis not the sickness of thy body, but the deadness of thy heart, and indisposition of thy soul, that keeps thee from duty. Thou wouldst fain have that in a better frame, and then thou wouldst not be long a stranger to it.

SECT. I.—*Ans.* First, Let me ask thee, Christian, what thou hast found (in the observation of thy own heart) to be the fruit that hath grown from such put offs and excuses? Hath neglect of duty at one time fitted thee for it at another? I believe not.—Sloth is not cured with sleep, nor laziness with idleness. If our leg be numbed, we walk, and so it wears off. Satan knows, if thou playest the truant to-day, thou wilt be more loth to go to school to-morrow. Give the flesh a little scope and liberty, by thus unlacing thyself, and it will endure less to be straitened afterwards. There is something to do to bridle a wanton beast, when he hath got the bit once out of his mouth. The spouse's coat sat very easy when on her back, and unwilling no doubt she was to be stripped; but when once, by a wile of satan, she was persuaded to put it off, how loth was she then to get it on again! And therefore, whenever you are turning from this or any other duty merely upon this account, consider well what is like to follow. One of these two will come of it; either thou wilt see thy sin, and return with shame and sorrow for thy neglect: And is it not less trouble to pray now, than upon such terms afterwards?

A heathen

A heathen could say, He would *not sin to buy repentance;* and shouldst not thou have more wisdom to know which is a bad bargain for thy soul than he! Or, secondly, This neglect will beget another, and that a third, and so thou wilt run further in arrears with thy conscience, till at last thou givest over all thoughts of renewing thy acquaintance with God, because thou hast discontinued it so long.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Examine from whence this present indisposition comes, and probably thou wilt find reason to charge it either upon some sinful miscarriage in thy Christian course, or on thy neglect of those preparatory means through which thou art to pass into the performance of this duty.

First, See whether thou hast not been tampering with some sin knowingly. There is an antipathy betwixt sinning and praying, partly from guilt, which makes the soul shy of coming into God's sight, because conscious of a fault. The child that hath mis-spent the day in play abroad, steals to bed at night, or plays least in sight, for fear of a chiding, or worse, from his father. And also as it doth roil, and disorder the heart: Sin and prayer are such contraries, that it is impossible at one stride to step from one to another. It is an ill time when the fountain is stopped, or mudded, to go to draw water thence. If the workman's tools be blunt or gapped, no work can be well done, till a new edge be set on them. It is the devil's policy, thus to disturb and unfit the Christian for duty, that he may leave it undone. And therefore, let thy first care be to keep the fountain of thy heart clear all the day long, as remembering, that from it those holy affections, which in prayer thou art to pour forth to God, must be drawn. Look thou lendest not any power of thy soul to be satan's instrument in sin's coarse foul work, lest thou find it out of case when thou art to use it in this spiritual service. A good servant will not have her dishes and pots foul when they should be used, but to stand clean and bright upon the shelf, to be ready against they are called for. And so is the true Christian characterized, 1 Tim. ii. 21. *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared for every good work.* But, secondly, If thou findest guilt to be contracted, and thence a fear to come so nigh God, as this duty will bring thee, yea, an estrangement also upon thy heart from this work, thy best way is speedily to renew thy repentance, and so thy faith, both for pardoning mercy and purging grace. New breaches are made up better than long quarrels.—Green wounds healed easier than old sores. Spots washed out sooner when newly got, than when engrained by long continuance. Ply thee to the throne grace. Water the earth, if thou canst, with thy tears, and fill heaven with thy sorrowful sighs for

thy sin; but by no means shift off the duty on this pretence; for that is not the way to mend the matter, but make it worse. Jonah did ill to consult his credit rather than the exaltation of God's mercy; and how he should come honourably off with his embassage, than how the name of the great God his master, that sent him, might be magnified. But he did worse when these sinful thoughts stirred in him, (which he should have humbled himself for), made him run away from his master's work also. Thus, Christian, it is ill done of thee to make a breach in thy holy course by tampering with any sin; but thou wilt commit a greater, if thou turnest thy back on God also in that ordinance where thou shouldst humble thyself for thy former sin. Can one sin be a good argument for committing another? Thou hast fallen into sin in the day, wilt thou not therefore pray at night? Surely it were better to beg of God forgiveness of this, and more grace, that thou mayest not do the like or worse to-morrow. Neglect of duty is not the way to help thee out of the pit thou art in, nor keep thee from falling into another. Take heed thou runnest not thyself further into temptation. Now is the time for the devil to set upon thee, when this weapon is out of thy hand. The best thou canst look for is a storm from God to bring back thee his runaway servant to thy work again: And the sooner it comes, the more merciful he is to thee.

SECT. III.—Secondly, If, upon thy faithful enquiry, thou findest not thy heart reproach thee to have indisposed thyself for duty by any known sin in the course of thy life, and yet thy heart continues lumpish and unfit for prayer, then probably thou wilt take thyself tardy in thy actual preparation to the duty.—Hast thou therefore solemnly endeavoured, by suitable meditations, to blow the coal of thy habitual grace, which, though not quenched by any gross sin, yet may be deadened, and covered with some ashes, by thy being over-busy in thy worldly employments? The well is seldom so full, that water will at first pumping flow forth; neither is the heart commonly so spiritual after our best care in our worldly converse, (much less, when we somewhat over-do therein) to pour itself into God's bosom freely, without some labour to raise and elevate it: yea, oft the springs of grace lie so low, that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul (like so many pails of water into the pump) before the affections rise. Hence are those soliloquies and discourses, which we find holy men use with their own hearts to bring them into a gracious temper, suitable for communion with God in ordinances; *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, praise his holy name: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*, Psal. ciii. 1, 2. It seems David either found or feared his heart would not

not be in so good a frame as he desired, that he redoubles his charge; he found sure his heart somewhat drowsy, which made him thus rub his eyes, and rouse up himself, now going to God in this duty; sometimes calling and exciting the heart will not do, but the heart must be chid, and taken up roundly: So David was fain to deal with himself at another time, Psal. xlii. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?* Heavy birds must take a run before they can get upon the wing. It is harder to get a great bell up, than to ring it when it is raised; and so is it with our hearts, harder work we shall find it to prepare them for duty, than to perform it, when they are got into some order. Now hast thou endeavoured this? If not, how canst thou make this a pretence to wave the duty because thou art indisposed, when thou hast not used the means to have thy clog taken off? This is as if one should excuse himself for not coming to the feast unto which he was invited, because forsooth he was not dressed, when indeed he never went about to make him ready.

SECT. IV.—Thirdly, But, if thou canst answer to the former question, and in some uprightness say, that thou hast not neglected preparatory means, but yet thy indisposition and deadness of heart remains. Though this case be not so ordinary, yet it is possible that a Christian may walk on those coals of meditation, which at one time would set his soul all on fire, and put his graces into a flame, yet at another he may find little warmth from them. And we will suppose this to be thy case: therefore consider that God may, and doth sometimes conceal his enlivening presence, till the soul be engaged in the work. And would it not grieve thee to lose such an opportunity? How oft hast thou found thyself at the entrance into a duty becalmed, as a ship, which at first setting sail hath hardly wind to swell its sails (while under the shore and shadow of the trees), but meets a fresh gale of wind when got into the open sea? Yea, didst thou never launch out to duty as the apostles to the sea, with the wind in thy teeth, as if the spirit of God, instead of helping thee on, meant to drive thee back, and yet hast found Christ walking to thee before the duty was done, and a prosperous voyage made of it at last? Abraham saw not the ram which God had provided for his sacrifice, till he was in the mount. *In the mount of prayer God is seen;* even when the Christian does oft go up the hill towards duty with a heavy heart, because he can as yet have no sight of him. Turn not therefore back, but on with courage, he may be nearer than thou thinkest on: *In that same hour,* saith Christ, *it shall be given unto you,* Mat. x. 19. *In the day,* said David, *that I cried, thou answeredst me, and gavest me strength in my soul,* Psal. cxxxviii.

cxxxviii. It is no more than the promise gives us security for; *The way of the Lord is strength.* Just as it is with a man, who at first going out on a journey feels a lassitude and feebleness in his limbs, but the further he goes, the more strength he gathers, as if there arose strength out of the ground he walks on. Truly the saints find this in God's way; Psal. cxix. 55, 56. *I have remembered thy name in the night, and have kept thy law; this I had, because I kept thy precepts.* His meaning is, by doing his best endeavour to keep them, he got this by the hand, to be able to keep them better, and he thinks himself so well paid, in this, for his pains, that he glories in it: *This I had.*—So the saint hath this for praying, he gets his heart in tune to pray better. We may observe those children in scripture, which came of barren wombs, were the greatest comforts to their parents when they had them. Witness Isaac, Samuel, and John. The greater deadness and barrenness thy heart (to thy own sense) lay under, and the less hope thou hadst to get out of the indisposition, the more joyful will the quickening presence of God be to thee. The assistance that thus surprizeth thee beyond thy expectation, will be a true Isaac, a child of joy and laughter. And a double reason is obvious why God doth thus.

First, From the great delight the Lord takes in pure obedience, *Obedience is better than sacrifice*, 1 Sam. xv. To pray in obedience, is better than barely to pray. This is the jewel in the ring of prayer. Now to pray in pure obedience, is to set upon the duty when there is no assistance visible, or encouragement sensible. To go to duty, not because God puts forth his hand to lead me, but because he holds forth his precepts to command me. As when a general commands his army to march, if then the soldiers should stand upon terms, and refuse to go, except they have better cloaths, their pay in hand, or the like, and then they will march; this would not shew them an obedient disciplined army: but if at the reading of their orders, they presently break up their quarters, and set forth, though it be midnight when the command come, and they without money in their purse, clothes on their back, leaving the whole care of themselves for these things, to their general, and they only attend how they may best fulfil his command; these may be said to march in obedience. Thus when a soul, after a faithful use of means, finds his heart dead and dull, yet in obedience to the command, kneels down, though the sense of his inability is so great, that he questions whether he shall have power to speak one word to God as he ought, yet had rather be dumb and dutiful, than disobedient in running away from his charge. Here is an obedient soul, and may hope to meet God in his way with that which he cannot carry with him: as the lepers, who when they went

in

in obedience to Christ's command, *to shew themselves to the priest*, were cured by the way, though they saw nothing of it when they set forth.

CHAP. X.

His Policy to start some Worldly Business, to be just then dispatched, when the Christian's Hour for Prayer comes; how it may be repelled.

SECONDLY, Another fetch that satan hath to make the Christion put off the duty of prayer as unseasonable at present, is some worldly business or other that then is to be dispatched, and therefore suggests such thoughts as these to divert him: I have no leisure now to pray, this business is to be done, and that necessary occasion calls for my attendance, I will therefore adjourn the performance till I can come with more freedom and leisure.

Now to arm thee, Christian, against such dilatory pretences, I shall lay down a few directions.

First, Take heed of overcharging thyself with worldly business, which then is done when thou graspest more thereof than will consist with thy heavenly trade, and Christian calling. God allows thee to give to the world that which is the world's, but he will not suffer thee to pay the world that which is due to him; rob Mary to lend to Martha; steal from thy closet to pay to thy kitchen. Thy particular calling is intended by God to be a help to thy general; it will therefore be thy sin to make that an incumbrance which is given as an advantage. And that which is itself a sin, cannot be a plea for the neglect of a duty. That servant would mend the matter but little, who excuseth his not doing a business his master commanded, by telling him he had drank too much when he should have gone about it. Nor will thy apology for passing thy time of prayer be better, that sayest thou hadst so much to do in the world, that thou couldst not find time to pray in.

Secondly, Labour to time thy season of prayer with discretion in the things of the world; if we have two businesses to dispatch in the same day, we contrive, if possible, that they may not interfere. And certainly a holy providence, to forecast how we may reconcile daily the demands of our closet and shop, our devotions and worldly employments, by laying out each its proportion of time, would ordinarily prevent much disorder and confusion

fusion in our walking. The prophet speaks of *the liberal man's devising liberal things*. We could not easily want time to pray in, if our hearts would but persuade our heads to devise and study how our other affairs might be disposed of, without prejudice to our devotions. That cloth which a bungler thinks too little for a garment, a good workman can make one of it, and leave some for another use also. O there is a great deal of art in cutting out time with little loss.

Thirdly, Be sure thou keepest a right notion of prayer in thy thoughts. Some look upon every minute of time spent in the closet lost in the shop, and no wonder, such are easily kept from prayer upon any pretended business, who think it a prejudice to their other affairs. But I hope, Christian, thou art better taught. Does the husbandman mow the less for whetting his scythe? Doth a good grace before meat spoil the dinner? No: Nor doth prayer hinder the Christian either in his employments or enjoyments, but expedites the one, and sanctifies the other. All agree, that, to the dispatch of a business (as to the winding of a skein of silk), nothing conduceth more, than to begin at the right end of it. And to be sure, the right end of any business is to begin with God, and engage him to help us. *Acknowledge God in all thy ways, and lean not to thy own understanding*, &c.

Fourthly, The more streights and difficulties thou conquerest to keep thy communion with God, the more kindly it is taken of God. No friend is more welcome to us, than he who breaks through many occasions to give us a visit. There is little cost, and as little love, in an idle man's visit; he that comes to see us, because he hath nothing else to do. Mary was Christ's favourite, who trod the world under her feet, that she might sit at Christ's feet. And the Bethshemites, who in their zeal (I confess their case is extraordinary), came out of their very *harvest-field, where they were reaping, to offer a sacrifice to the Lord*, 1 Sam. vi. 13.

Fifthly, Be faithful and impartial in considering the importance and necessity of that business, which is propounded as an apology for not performing this duty at thy usual season. It cannot be denied, but such a necessary occasion may emerge and fall out, for which the Christian may, without sin, adjourn the solemn performance of his devotions to another more fit time. Who doubts but a Christian may, when he riseth, go to quench his neighbour's house on fire, though by this he be kept out of his closet, and detained from offering to God that solemn morning sacrifice of praise and prayer he was wont? Yea, though the occasion be not so extraordinary: If it be, First, About that which is lawful in itself. Secondly, Of importance. Thirdly, Necessary, then to be dispatched. And Fourthly, If it surprizeth us, and we do

not

not bring it upon ourselves by our own fault, the duty of prayer may, without sin, be adjourned for a fitter time. But let us take heed of stamping a pretended necessity on things and actions, only to gratify our lazy hearts with a handsome excuse, whereby we may both save the pains of performing a duty, and also escape a chiding from our conscience for the non-performance of it. Of all fools, he is the worst, that is witty to put a cheat on himself, and especially on his soul; such a one must expect, that the less his conscience barks at present, the more it will bite when it shall be unmuzzled. *Again*, If the occasion be, as is is said, important and necessary, whereby thou art called off from the solemn performance of this duty at present: Then, First, Lift up thy heart in an ejaculatory prayer to God, to guide and guard thee: This is the short dagger thou art to use for thy defence against temptation, when thou hast no time to draw the long sword of solemn prayer. Thus thou mayest pray in any place, company, or employment. A short parenthesis interrupts not the sense of a discourse, but gives an elegance to it. And a short ejaculation to heaven will not interrupt any business thou art about, but advantage it much. Secondly, Be careful to recover this loss which thy worldly business hath put thee to in thy communion with God, by more abounding in the duty upon thy next opportunity. The tradesman who is kept from his dinner on the market-day, goes the sooner to his supper, and eats the freer meal at night. If you be hindered of your rest one night by business, you will take it up the next. O that we were as wise for our souls, what we are prevented of at one time, to recover with advantage at another, by a doubled enlargement of our hearts in our prayers and meditations!

CHAP. XI.

Satan's Policy to discourage the Christian from Prayer, under a Pretence that the Mercies he would beg are too great for him to hope he shall ever receive.

Strat. 3. SATAN discourages sometimes the Christian when on his way to this duty, from the greatness of those requests which he hath to put up to the throne of grace. Thou art going to pray (Christian, will he say), and will nothing serve thee less than pardon of sin, love and favour of God, with eternal life? &c. Surely thou art too free of another's purse, and too kind to thyself, if thou thinkest to be welcome at God's door with

with so bold an errand. This is a boon reserved for some few favourites, and darest thou think so well of thyself, that thou art one of them?

The defensative. Now to arm thee, Christian, against this, that thou mayest neither be kept from the duty, nor go misgivingly to it upon this account; *The greatness of thy request.*— Ponder upon these five considerations, which will amount to a full answer to this cavil.

SECT. I.—First, Oppose the greatness of that God thou art going to make thy address unto, against the greatness of thy request. We are bid, Deut. xxxii. 3. *to ascribe greatness to our God:* And, if ever, especially when kneeling down to pray.— Wert thou to put up thy request to some puny prince, or petty creature, thou hadst reason to consider, whether thy pitcher were not too great that thou wouldst have filled. Possibly thou mayest ask such a one more at one clap, than he is worth. *Help, O Lord, my King*, (said the woman in the famine of Samaria), yet she had not relief; *If the Lord do not help, whence shall I help thee?* 2 Kings vi. Or possibly if he hath power, he may want a heart to part with so much as will serve thy turn; there are many of Nabal's name in the world, such churls, who think every bit of bread lost, that they eat not themselves; yea, some who grudge their own belly its necessary food. Wert thou at the door of such as those, what couldst thou expect but cold welcome? But remember, he is a great God, great in power: Thou canst not over-ask; thou mayest draw thine arrow to the head, and yet not overshoot the power of God; even when thou hast drawn thy desires to the highest pitch, he will be above thee; *For he is able to do exceedingly above what we can ask or think.*— Wouldst thou have thy sins pardoned? Yes, if they were not too great, thou sayest: But can God at once discount such a sum, and discharge so a vast a debt, that hath been gathering many years by a full trade of constant sinning, with so great a stock of means and mercies as I have had, and thereby the unhappy advantage of making the greater return? Yes, he is able abundantly to pardon, without any wrong to himself, or controul from any other. The sovereign power of life and death being in his hands, he is accountable to none, as not for acts of justice, so neither of mercy. *Who shall condemn? It is God that justifies*, Rom. viii. If indeed a man forgive thee a wrong done unto him, thou canst not think thyself therefore acquitted by God; his wrath may still abide on thee. Man cannot give away God's right.— Were a man so kind to forgive the thief that robbed him, yet it is not in his power to discharge him of the penalty of the law. But if the prince, who is the law-giver, will do it, none can gain-say. If God will pass an act of mercy, thou art free indeed; for the

power

power lies in his hands. Is it any masterly lust, from whose tyranny thou wouldst beg deliverance? The God thou prayest to, is able to break open thy prison-door, and make thee, a poor captive, go out free. He can give these, thine enemies, as dust to thy sword, and as a driven stubble to thy bow, yea, destroy them with a cast of his eye. *The Lord looked on the Egyptians, and troubled their host,* Exod. xiv. 24. His very look was as heavy as a mill-stone about their necks; presently they sunk, horse and rider, like lead, to the bottom of the sea. And sin and satan are no more before God, than were Pharaoh and his host. In a word, Is it comfort thou wouldst ask, if it might be had? Oh! know, he is a creator thou prayest to; though thy heart were as void of comfort, as the chaos was of light, yet can he with a word, cause a new heaven of joy to arise out of thy confused soul, and make thee in one moment to step out of darkness into light; neither is his mercy less than his power. Oh launch therefore into this bankless bottomless sea by thy faith; behold the wonders of God in these depths, and do not stand reasoning thyself into unbelief by any uncomely comparisons between God and the narrow-hearted creature; *He is God, and not man;* none of these defects are to be found in his mercy, which we impotent creatures find in ourselves. The paleness we see sometimes is not in the sun, but from the clouds that interpose. The stars do not blink nor twinkle, as is thought, but we, because of their vast distance, and our weak organ, cannot behold them with a fixed eye: Nor have the jealousies and fears entertained by tempted souls, to the disparagement of the mercy of God, any foundation in the divine nature, but are mere *entia rationis*, bug-bears, which, through the darkness of their troubled spirits, and distemperature of a melancholy fancy, satan hath the advantage of affrighting them with. O beware therefore thou dost not disfigure the sweet lovely face of God's mercy, which smiles alike upon every poor, penitent, praying soul, while thou fanciest God to have a cast of this his eye, and to look more favourably upon one than another, lest by this you do betray the glorious name of God, to be rent in pieces by your cruel unbelief! If you once come to wrap up God in your hard thoughts as slow to hear, hard to be wrought on with your prayers and tears, truly then satan may easily persuade you to commit any sin against him, because you expect no mercy from him.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Oppose the promise to thy fears: There is no mercy thou canst desire, but is promised before-hand unto the prayer of faith; the mercy thou wouldst have is already voted in heaven, and the grant past, only God stays for thy coming over to the throne of grace, there to lay thy claim to the promise before he issueth it forth. The mercy lies in the womb of

of the promise, but stays for thy prayer of faith to obstetricate, and give it a fair deliverance. *The children are come to the birth*, said Hezekiah. The promise is big, *wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left*, Isaiah xxxvii. That is, if any thing will help, it must be that. What can a petitioner desire more in his address to a prince for some great favour, than to be assured not only the prince is of a gracious merciful nature, but also that he hath obliged himself to give that which he hath in his thoughts to desire? And shall only the promises of God be counted light and little worth! Have you not heard of such a promise, *Ask, that your joy may be full?* Did ever a vain word drop from the lips of truth? Doth he make an order one day, and reverse it another? Are his words yea and nay? And not rather *Yea and amen for ever?* 2 Cor. i. 20. Beggars use to be quick-sighted. Benhadad's servants saw light at a little hole; and gathered from a few kind words which dropped from Ahab's mouth, that there was mercy raked up in his heart towards their master, which they soon blew up. Joab saw David's bowels working towards Absalom through the casement of his countenance, and therefore lets down the widow's parable as a bucket to draw out that mercy which lay in his heart, like water in a deep well. How much more encouragement hast thou, Christian, to plead with thy God, who art not put to guess at God's thoughts, but hast the assurance of plain promises for thy good speed! Oh what fools, and how slow of heart are we to believe the good word of God! If Moses supposed his brethren would have understood, by the kind visit he gave them, and his friendly office in rescuing one single Israelite from his oppressor's hand, that God would by him deliver them all; how much more may God expect that his people should understand his purposes of love towards them, when he exposeth his heart to so open a view of their faith by his promise, and hath sealed the truth thereof with so many examples, to whom already full payment hath been made of the same? And do we yet read them, as once the eunuch that sweet promise, Isa. liii. and understand not the meaning of them? Do we yet sit so near our comfort, as Hagar by the well, and our eyes held not to see it? Can we yet walk over the promise as barren ground, when with a little digging into them, we might find a treasure to pay all our debts, and supply all our wants?

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Oppose to thy fears not only the greatness of the promise, but also the valuable consideration upon which they are made. Christ pays for what thou prayest.—Thou indeed beggest alms, but Christ demands the same as debt. God is merciful to thee, but just to him. And therefore, Christian, though it becomes thee to sink thyself beneath the least mercy

mercy in thy own thoughts, yet it behoves thee to be tender of Christ's credit, whose merit is as far above the greatest mercy thou canst beg, as thou art beneath the least. The Father will give you little thanks for casting any dishonourable reflection upon his Son, on whom himself hath heaped so much glory; yea, with whose honour his own is so interwoven, that whatsoever dishonours the Son, dishonours the Father that sent him.

Now there are three privileges purchased for every believer; and none of them can be lost by us without dishonour to him.

First, He hath purchased a liberty to pray; it had been death to come on such an errand to God, till he had by his blood paved a way, and procured a safe conduct, Heb. x. 17.

Secondly, An ability to pray, as he purchased the spirit for us, called therefore, *the spirit of promise.*

Thirdly, The safe return of our prayers; *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. Indeed it is his business in heaven, to own our cause there in open court, and to present his blood as ready money to be laid down for all his saints beg, that no demur be made to their requests: So that either thou must blot this article of Christ's intercession out of thy creed, or else put thyself to shame for questioning thy entertainment with God, when thou hast so good a friend at court to speak for thee.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, The greatness of thy request cannot hinder thy speeding, because they are most welcome that ask most. Who are the persons frowned on at the throne of grace, but those who lay out the strength of their desires, and bestow their greatest importunity, for mercies of least weight and worth? Hos. vii. 14. *They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled on their beds.* Mark! the Lord did not account that they prayed at all, for all their loud cry; and why, but because he disdained their low and drossy spirit, in crying loudest for that which deserved least, as the following words will resolve us, *They assemble themselves for corn and wine, and rebel against me;* they would have a good crop, with a full vintage, and these scraps should serve them, so as not to trouble God for any more. God, his love, and favour, are quite left out of the story. May they but have their bellies crammed, they have all their wishes, and leave the other for those that like them better. Oh how God abhors these prostrate souls, and carnal prayers! When men *tithe mint* and *cummin* in their prayers, but neglect the weightier things of the promises, such are an interest in Christ, forgiveness of sins, a new heart, grace here, and glory hereafter: Or, when they aim at low and base ends in praying for these things that in themselves are noble and high.—And therefore fear not the greatness of thy request; God had ra-

ther give thee heaven, than earth; he can more willingly bestow himself on thee that art in love with him, than a crust of bread on another that regards him not. The greater the mercy is thou askest, the greater rent and revenue wilt thou pay him for it.—The less he gives, the less he receives. By low requests thou wrongest two at once. Thou art a thief to thyself in wanting what thou mayest have for asking; in bringing a little vessel, when thou mightest have a great one filled. Neither art thou so good a friend to thy God, as thou shouldst; for the less grace thou hast from him, the less glory thou wilt return unto him. The reflex beams are proportionable to the lightsome body they come from. Where grace is weak, the reflexion it makes of praise and glory to God, can be but weak and dark.

SECT. V.—Fifthly, God is so free and redundant in communicating his mercy, that he exceeds his people's modesty in asking. He gives them commonly their prayers with an over-plus, more than they have faith or face to ask; as Naaman, when Gehazi asked one talent, would needs force two upon him.—Abraham asked a child of God, when he wanted an heir in whom he might live when dead. Now God promises him a son, and more than so, a numerous offspring; yea, more still, such an offspring, that, in his offspring, *all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*. Jacob, he desired but God's pass, under the protection of which he might go and return safely, with food and raiment enough to keep him alive, Gen. xxviii. 20. Well, this he shall have, but God thinks it not enough, and therefore sends him home with two bands, who went out a poor fugitive, with little besides his pilgrim's staff. Solomon prays for wisdom, and God throws in wealth and honour, 2 Chron. i. 10. The woman of Canaan begs a crumb, as much as we would cast to a dog, and Christ gives her a child's portion; she came to have her sick child made well, and with it she hath the life of her own soul given her.—Yea, Christ puts the key of his treasure into her own hand, and leaves her, as it were, to serve herself; *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt*, Mat. xv. 28.

CHAP. XII.

Satan's Endeavour to interrupt the Christian at Prayer, by wandering roving Thoughts, and his Design both against God and the Saint therein.

2. A Second design satan hath against the Christian is, to interrupt him in the duty (when he can by no means keep him

him from it). It is hard to steal a prayer, and the devil not know what thou art going about. He watches thy motions, Christian, and is at thy heels wherever thou turnest; if thou art about any evil action, he is at thy elbow to jog thee on, or before thee, to remove every stone out of the way, that the bowl may go the more smoothly on, and thou mayest not be sick of the enterprize, by the rubs thou meetest in the way. Ahab had but a plot hatching in his thoughts of going up to Ramoth-Gilead, and presently satan hath his knights of the post, whom he sends to bid him go up and prosper. David himself had but some proud thoughts stirring him up to number the people, satan takes the advantage, and works with the humour now moving, whereby it soon ripened into that sore, which God lanced with so sharp a judgment as the loss of seventy thousand men. Now he is as skilful and ready at hand to disturb a holy action, as to promote a wicked. When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, satan forgets not to be among them; he is no recusant; scruples not to be present when you worship God; indeed he is first there, and last thence. Sometimes thou shalt find him injecting motions of his own; sometimes wire-drawing thy own; when he sees a vain thought, a sin sprung by thy wanton fancy, he will help thee to pursue the chase. To be sure, he will be at one end of every inordinate motion of thy heart; either the father to beget, or the nurse to bring them up.

There are so many and diverse, that we may as well tell the atoms we see in a sun-beam, as number and sort this miscellaneous heap of roving thoughts which are incident to the Christian in prayer. Sometimes he will inject such as are sinful, proud, filthy, yea, blasphemous thoughts; not that he hopes to find entertainment in the Christian's heart for such guests, much less to make a settlement of them there with the gracious soul's consent; but to make a hurly-burly, and confusion in his spirit, whereby, as upon some sudden scare in our assemblies, the holy exercise he is now about, may be hindered. Sometimes he will prompt thoughts holy in themselves (but impertinent), which, at another time, himself would oppose with all his might, but now presents them, because most likely to find welcome, and fit enough to serve his present purpose; being, though good fruit, yet brought forth in a bad season. I believe none, that have any acquaintance with this duty, and their hearts in it, are altogether strangers to satan's slights of this nature.

Now he hath a double plot; one levelled against God himself; another against the Christian thereby.

SECT. I.—First, *Against God.* The devil knows very well, that not the least part of his tribute of honour, is by the christian paid upon his knees in this solemn act of divine worship, to

intercept which, is both his great ambition and endeavour. Nay, he despairs not, if his design takes, to make the christian dishonour him most, where God looks his name should be above all sanctified. Indeed those have the unhappy opportunity of casting the greatest indignities on God, who are admitted to stand nearest him. Should he who hath the honour to set the crown on his prince's head, bring it in a filthy case, and so clap it on; or instead of the king's own royal crown, bring some ridiculous one of straw, or such like stuff contrived on purpose to make laughter; what greater scorn could such a one possibly invent to throw upon his prince! The attributes of God are his royal diadem; and it is no small honour that the great God puts upon the christian, by admitting him, as it were, to set this crown on his head, which he doth, when in prayer he gives him the glory of his majesty and holiness, power and mercy, truth and faithfulness, &c. with such humble adoration, and holy ravishment of affection, as may comport with the infinite perfections of his deity. But if our present thoughts in prayer be not of God, or not suitable to God, and these his glorious excellencies, we pollute his name, and not honour it; we mock him, not worship him; in a word, we pull off his crown, as much as in us lies, rather than set it on. Now doth not thy heart tremble, christian, in thy bosom, to think thou shouldst be satan's instrument to offer such an indignity as this unto thy God and king! Thou art, if a saint, the temple of the Holy Ghost, prayer the spiritual sacrifice which from the altar of a humble heart thou art to offer; wilt thou now suffer satan to sit in this temple of God and exalt himself there, by any vain, much less vile thoughts, above God himself, whom thou art worshipping! Suppose while a prince is at dinner, a company of impudent ruffians should rush into the room, through the negligence of the prince's servants that are waiting on him, and they should throw the dishes, one this way, another that way; would not these servants deserve a severe rebuke that looked no better to the door? ordinances of worship are God's table, the sacrifices under the law, called God's food and bread. When the saint is praying, the king of heaven sits at his table, Cant. i. 12. The dishes served up are the graces of his spirit in the saint.—Now wandering thoughts they come in, and turn the table as it were upside down, they spill the spikenard which thou shouldst pour forth: How ill may thy God take it, that thou lookest no better to the door of thy heart!

SECT. II.—Secondly, His spite is at thee, christian, First, If he can get thee to sport with these, or sluggishly yield to them without making any vigorous resistance, that prayer, he knows, will neither do him hurt, nor thyself good. Dost thou think God will welcome that prayer to heaven, which hath not thy heart to bear

bear it company thither? And how can thy heart go with it, when thou hast sent it another way? It were a vain thing to expect that ship should make a prosperous voyage, which is set a-drift to sea to be carried whither every wave it meets will drive it, without any pilot to steer it to a certain haven, or such a one that hath no skill or care to hold the helm with a steady hand: Such are the prayers that come from a roving heart: Will God hear thee when thou mockest him? And if this be not to mock him, what is it? Like children that give a knock at a door, and then run away to their play again. Thus thou rearest up thy voice to God, and then art gone in thy roving thoughts to hold chat with the world or worse, forgetting whom thou spakest last to. Is not this to play bo-peep with God? *Magnam injuriam Deo facio, cum precor, ut meas preces exaudiat, quas ego qui fundo, non exaudio. Deprecor illum, ut mihi intendat, ego vero, nec mihi, nec illi, intendo.* Thus the holy man complains of himself: How injurious and unworthy of God his carriage was in prayer, *I would have God*, saith he, *hear that prayer which myself doth not, when I put it up: I would have God's ear attentive to me, when I neither mind God, nor myself, when I pray.* Secondly, He disturbs thee in praying, that he may make thee weary of praying. Indeed he is not likely to miss his mark, if thou lettest these vermin go on to breed in thy heart; for these will rob thee of the sweetness of the duty; and when the marrow is once out, thou wilt easily be persuaded to throw the bone away. *Omnis vita gustu ducitur.* He is in danger to forsake his meat, who hath lost his relish for it. Prayer is a tedious weary work to him, that hath no pleasure in performing of it; and weariness in it, stands next door to being weary of it. Thirdly, Thou provokest the spirit of God (that alone can carry you through the work) to withdraw his assistance. Who will help him that minds not what he does? You know what Joab said to David, when he indulged his inordinate passion for the loss of Absalom, *If thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night, and that will be worse with thee than all the evil that befel thee*, 2 Sam. xix. 7. Truly either thou must speedily rouse thyself out of thy sloth and non-attendance, or else the spirit will be gone; and he departed, it will be worse with thee than ever. Whom hast thou then to help thee in thy work? And thou wilt find it harder to bring him back, than to keep him from going. The necessary infirmities which cleave to thy imperfect state (if protested against) shall not drive him away, but if thou lettest him nestle in thy heart, he takes it as thy giving him warning to be gone. An affront done to an ambassador by the baser sort of people as he walks in the street, while resident in a foreign state, may be passed over; but when such shall find discountenance from the prince, it then makes a breach. Take

heed, therefore, of shewing favour to such disturbers of the league betwixt God and thy soul. Thy heart, which should be a house of prayer, Christ will not endure to have it a place of merchandize. Either thou must whip these buyers and sellers out, or the spirit will go out. We read of an *abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*, Mat. xxiv. which some interpret to be the Roman ensigns there displayed when Jerusalem was taken. This abomination ushered in desolation. What dost thou by thy roving thoughts, but set up an abomination in the temple of thy heart? Oh! down with these, as thou wouldst not be left desolate, and wholly void of God's gracious presence with thee.

CHAP. XIII.

Contains the First Cause of Roving Thoughts in Prayer, with its Cure.

Quest. BUT it may be now you will ask, What counsel can you give to arm us against both these incursions of satan, and bublings of our own vain hearts in prayer? How can we keep either our hearts in, or these out?

Ans. Impossible indeed it is wholly to prevent them, they come so suddenly and secretly, even as lightning in at the window. We may as well keep the wind out of our house (which gets in at every crevice) though the doors be shut, as wholly free our hearts from their disturbance. Yet this will not disoblige us from our utmost care and endeavour to hinder the prevalency of them. Humours, while rolling here and there, do not endanger us so much, as when they gather to a head, and settle in some joint and part of the body. I have read of some eastern parts of the world, where such multitudes of locusts and caterpillars are seen, that they almost darken the air as they fly, and devour every green thing where they light. The inhabitants, therefore, when they perceive this army hovering over them, by making fires in their fields, keep them from lighting with the smoak that ascends therefrom. Thou canst not hinder these roving thoughts from flying now and then over thy head, but surely thou mayest do something that may prevent their settling.—Towards which good work take these directions, which I shall endeavour to suit to those several causes from whence they proceed.

SECT. I.—First, The first cause, and indeed original of all other, is the natural vanity and levity of our minds, which are as inconsistent

inconsistent as quicksilver, that hath, they say, *Principium motus, sed non quietis.* They are as unstable as water, which fluid element (as we see in a little of it poured on the ground) diffuseth itself hither and thither, and so is soon drunk up and lost. Thus do our vain minds scatter themselves into impertinencies, but never so much, as when we are conversant about spiritual duties: then above all, we discover the lightness of our spirits; and this is not the least part of that evil, which followed man's degeneracy, who by his fall wounded both head and heart. Now though there be a cure in part, made by the grace of God as to both these in a saint, yet there still remains a craze in his soul, whereby he is not able to dwell long upon spiritual things without some dissipation of thoughts, as innocent Adam could, who before his fall might have walked through the whole world, and not have had one thought of his heart misplaced, or turned from its right point by the diversity of objects he met; they being all to the eye of his soul a clear medium, through which it passed to terminate itself in God, as the air is now to our bodily eye through which it pierceth, and stays not till it comes at the body of the sun. But, alas, it is with us as with one that hath had his skull broke by some dangerous fall, who, when recovered, finds his brain so weakened, that when he goes about any serious business, he cannot intend much, or persist long, but is off and on, out and in; such vagaries and cross steps do our hearts take in duty, and this gives satan advantage enough to work upon. If the ship be light for want of ballast, and a strong gust of wind arise too, O how hard then is it to make it sail trim, or keep from turning over! A vain heart and a strong temptation together makes sad work, when God stands by, and gives satan leave to practise upon it. Be therefore careful to take in thy ballast before thou puttest to sea. Labour to poise thy heart before thou goest to pray: which that thou mayest do,

SECT. II.—First, Inure thyself to holy thoughts in thy ordinary course. The best way to keep vessels from leaking (when we would use them for some special occasion) is to let them stand full. A vain heart out of prayer, will be little better in prayer. The more familiar thou makest holy thoughts and savoury discourse to thee in thy constant walking, the more seasoned thou wilt find thy heart for this duty. A scholar, by often rubbing up his notions when alone, and talking of them with his colleagues, makes them his own; so that when he is put upon any exercise, they are at hand, and come fresh into his head: whereas another, for want of this filling, wants matter for his thoughts to feed on, which makes him straggle into many impertinencies before he can hit on that which suits his occasion. The carnal liberty which we give our hearts in our ordinary walking, makes our thoughts

more unruly and unsuitable for duties of worship: for such thoughts and words leave a tincture upon the spirit, and so hinder the soul's taking a better colour, when it returns into the presence of God. Walk in the company of sinful thoughts all the day, and thou wilt hardly shut the door upon them, when thou goest into thy closet. Thou hast taught them to be bold; they will now plead acquaintance with thee, and crowd in after thee, like little children, who if you play with them, and carry them much in your arms, they will cry after you when you would be rid of their company.

SECT. III.—Secondly, Possess thy heart with a reverential awe of God's majesty and holiness. This, if any thing, will gird up the loins of thy mind strait, and make thee, *hoc agere*, mind what thou art about. Darest thou toy and trifle with the Divine Majesty in a duty of his worship? Carry thyself childishly before the living God, to look with one eye upon him, as it were, and with the other upon a lust? to speak one word to God, and chat two with the world? Does not thy heart tremble at this! *Sic ora*, saith Bernard, *quasi assumptus et præsentatus ante faciem ejus in excelso throno, ubi millia millium ministrant ei.* So pray as if thou wert taken up and presented before God sitting on his royal throne on high, with millions of millions of his glorious servitors ministring unto him in heaven. Certainly the face of such a court would awe thee. If thou wert but at the bar before a judge, and hadst a glass of a quarter of an hour's length turned up, being all the time thou hadst allowed thee to improve for the begging of thy life, now forfeited and condemned, wouldst thou spare any of this little time to gaze about the court, to see what clothes this man hath on, and what lace another wears? God shame us for our folly in mis-spending our praying seasons. Is it not thy life thou art begging at God's hands? and that a better, I trow, than the malefactor sues for of his mortal judge; and dost thou know whether thou shalt have so long as a quarter of an hour allowed thee when thou art kneeling down? and yet wilt thou scribble and dash it out to no purpose upon impertinencies! If thou believest not God to be so great and glorious, why dost thou pray? If thou dost, why no better? why no closer, and compact in thy thoughts? Will God judge us for every idle word that is spoken in our shop and house; at our work, yea, sport and recreation? And shall thy idle words in prayer not be accounted for? And are not those idle words that come from a lazy heart, a sleepy heart that minds not what it says? What procured Nadab and Abihu so sudden and strange a death? Was it not their strange incense? And is not this strange praying, when thy mind is a stranger to what thy lips utter? Behave thyself thus to thy prince, if thou darest. Let thy

thy hand reach a petition to him, and thine eye look, or thy tongue talk to another, would he not command this clown, or rather madman, to be taken from before him? *Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow into my presence?* 1 Sam. xxi. 5. said Achish, when David behaved himself discomposedly. O could you but look through the key-hole, and see how glorious angels in heaven serve their Maker, who are said to *behold the face of God continually*, surely thou wouldst tremble to think of thy slightly performing this duty.

Thirdly, Go not in thy own strength to this duty, but commit thyself, by faith, to the conduct of the spirit of God. God hath promised to prepare, or establish (as the word is) the heart.—Indeed then the heart is prepared, when established and fixed. A shaking hand may as soon write a right line, as our loose hearts keep themselves steady in duty. Shouldst thou, with Job, make a covenant with thine eye, and resolve to bung up thine ear from all by-discourse! how long, thinkest thou, shouldst thou be true to thine own self, who hast so little command of thine own thoughts? Thy best way were to put thyself out of thine own hands, and lay thy weight on him that is able to bear thee better than thy own legs. Pray with David, *Uphold me, Lord, with thy free spirit*, Psal. ii. 12. The vine leaning on a wall, preserves itself and its fruit, whose own weight else, without this help, would soon lay it in the dirt.

CHAP. XIV.

Contains the Second Cause of Wandering Thoughts in Prayer, with its proper Cure.

2. A Second cause of these wandering roving thoughts in prayer, is a dead and an unactive heart in him that prayeth. If the affections be once down, then the Christian is as a city whose wall is broken down: no keeping then the thoughts in, or satan out. The soul is an active creature; either it must be employed by us, or it will employ us, though to little purpose.—Like our poor, find them work, and they keep at home; but let them want it, and you have them roving and begging all the country over. The affections are as the master-workmen, which set our thoughts on work. Love entertains the soul with pleasant and delightful thoughts on its beloved object. Grief commands in the soul to muse with sorrowful thoughts on its ail and trouble. So that, Christian, as long as thy heart bleeds in the sense

sense of sin, they will have no leisure when thou art confessing sin, to rove and wander; if thy desires be lively, and flame forth in thy petitions with a holy zeal for the graces and mercies prayed for, this will be as a wall of fire to keep thy thoughts at home. The lazy prayer is the roving prayer. When Israel talked of travelling three days journey in the wilderness, Pharaoh said, *Ye are idle, ye are idle;* therefore they said, *Let us go.* As if he had said, Surely they have little to do, or else they would not think of gadding; and therefore, to cure them of this, he commanded more work to be given them, Exod. iii. We may truly say thus of our wandering hearts, they are idle; we pray, but our affections are dead and dull. The heart hath little to do in the duty for the setting of its thoughts on work, only to speak or read a few words, which is so easy a task, that a man may do it, and spare whole troops of his thoughts to be employed elsewhere at the same time. But now when the affections are up, melting into sorrow in the confession of sin, sallying forth with holy panting and breathing in its supplications, truly this fixeth the thoughts. The soul intended can no more be in two places together, than the body. And as these holy affections will prevent the soul's wandering disposition, so also make it more difficult for satan to throw in his injections. Flies will not so readily light on a pot seething hot on the fire, as when it stands cold in the window. Beelzebub is one of the devil's names; that is, the god of a fly: in allusion to the idolatrous sacrifices where flies were so busy. This fly will not so readily light on thy sacrifice when flaming from the altar of thy heart with zeal. Now to preserve thy affections in prayer warm and lively, let it be thy care to chase and stir up the natural heat that is undoubtedly in thee, if a Christian, by the serious considerations of thy sins, wants, and mercies. While thou art pondering on these, thine eyes will affect thine heart; they will, as Abishag did to David, by laying them in thy bosom, bring thy soul to a kindly heat in those affections, which thou art to act in the several parts of prayer. Thy sins reviewed and heightened with their aggravations, will make the springs of godly sorrow to rise in thy heart. Canst thou chuse but mourn, when thou shalt read the several indictments to thy guilty soul, now called to hold up its hand at the bar of thy conscience? Canst thou hear how the holy law of God hath been violated, his spirit grieved, and his Son murdered by thy bloody hands, and this when he hath been treating thee mercifully, and not mourn! Surely should a man walk over a field after a bloody battle hath been fought, and there see the bodies, though of his enemies, lying weltering in their blood, his heart could not but then relent, though in the heat of battle his fury shut out all thoughts of pity; but what if he should spy a father or a dear friend

friend dead upon the place, of the wounds which his unnatural hand had given, would not his bowels turn? Yes surely, if he carried the heart of a man in his bosom. Thou mayest guess, Christian, by this, what help such a meditation would afford toward the breaking of thy heart for thy sins: certainly it would make thee throw away that unhappy dagger which was the instrument to give those deep stabs to the heart of Christ, and this is the best mourning of all. Again, thy wants, well weighed, would give wings to thy desires. If once thou wert possessed with the true state of thy affairs, how necessary it is for thee to have supplies from heaven, or to starve, and die, and so in the rest, &c.

CHAP. XV.

Contains a Third Cause of Wandering Thoughts in Prayer, with its Cure.

3. A Third cause of roving thoughts is, incumbrance of worldly cares. It is no wonder that men can enjoy no privacy with God in a duty, who hath so many from the world rapping at his door to speak with him, when he is speaking to God. *Periclitatur pietas in negotiis:* Religion never goes in more danger, than when in a croud of worldly business. If such a one prays, it is not long before something comes in his head to take him off. *Isaac went to meditate, and behold the camels.* The world is soon in such a one's sight; he puts forth one hand to heaven in a spiritual thought, but soon pulls it back, and a worldly one steps before it, and so makes a breach upon his duty. *Dreams,* Solomon tells us, *come from a multitude of business.* And so do dreaming prayers: they are made up of heterogeneal independent thoughts. The shop, barn, warehouse, are unfit places for prayer; I mean the shop in the heart, and the barn in the heart. I have read of one, who was said to be a walking library, because he left not his learning with his books in his study, but carried them about him wherever he went in his memory, and judgment, that had digested all he read, and so made them his own. And have we not too many walking shops and barns, who carry them to bed and board, church and closet? And how can such pray with an united heart, who have so many sharers in their thoughts! *O anima sancta sola esto, anne nescis, verecundum habes sponsum!* O holy soul, get thee alone, if thou wouldst have Christ give thee his love; knowest thou not thou hast a modest husband? Indeed

Indeed he gives not the soul his embraces in a croud, nor the kisses of his lips in a market. Jacob sends away his company to the other side of the river, and then God gave him one of the sweetest meetings he had in all his life; let him now pray even a whole night if he will, and welcome. Now, Christian, for thy help against these,

SECT. I.—First, Labour to keep thy distance to the world, and that sovereignty which God hath given thee over it in its profits and pleasures, or whatever else may prove a snare to thee. While the father and master know their place, and keep their distance, so long children and servants will keep theirs, by being dutiful and officious; but when they forget this, the father grows fond of the one, and the master too familiar with the other, then they begin to lose their authority, and the other to grow saucy, and under no command; bid them go, and it may be they will will not stir; set them a task, and they will bid you do it yourself. Truly thus it fares with the Christian; all the creatures are his servants, and so long as he keeps his heart at a holy distance from them, and maintains his lordship over him, not laying them in his bosom, which God hath put under his feet, Psalm viii. all is well; he marches to the duties of God's worship in a goodly order. He can be private with God, and these not be bold to croud in to disturb him; but when we grow fond of, and too familiar with them, alas, how are we pestered with them! We read of no undutifulness of Hagar towards her mistress while a servant; but when Sarah gives her into Abraham's bosom, and admits her to share with herself in conjugal privileges, truly then she begins to justle with her mistress, and carries herself saucily to her: Yea, and Abraham himself, who would not have stuck to have put her away before, yet now he hath taken her into his bed, can hardly persuade his heart to yield to it, till God joins with Sarah in the business, bidding him *hearken unto his wife*. Thus, Christian, use the world as a servant, which it was made for, and you may go to prayer, as Abraham up the mount, leaving his servants below; thou shalt find they will not have that power to disturb thee; but let either the profits or pleasures share with Christ in thy conjugal affection, and thou wilt find thy heart loth to send this Hagar away, though at the request of Christ himself, when he is calling thee into communion with himself; either use the world as if thou usedst it not, or you will pray as if you prayed not. The smoke and sparks that rise from a furnace are carried that way the wind lies; if thy heart be to the world, thou canst not then keep thy thoughts from driving thither: Then, and not till then, will thy prayer ascend like a pillar of incense, when there is a holy calmness on thy spirit, and this boisterous wind of inordinate affections to the world be laid. I

must

must not take thee off from diligence in thy worldly calling, this never spoils a good prayer, only watch thy heart, that thou prostitute it not to the wanton embraces of it. That is the pure metalled sword or knife, which bends this way, and that way, but returns to its straitness again, and stands not bent. That heart is of the right make, and hath heaven's stamp upon it, which can stoop, and bend to the lowest action of his worldly calling, but then returns to his fitness for communion with God, and his heart stands not bent to the creature, but in a direct line to God, and his worship.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Strengthen thy faith on the providence of God for the things of this life. A distrustful heart is ever thoughtful; whatever he is doing, his thoughts will be on that he fears he shall lose. When the merchant's adventure is insured (that whatever comes he cannot lose much) his heart then is at rest, he can eat his bread with quiet, and sleep without dreaming of shipwrecks and pirates; while another, whose estate is at sea, and fears what will become of it, Oh! how is this poor man haunted wherever he is going, whatever he is doing, with disquieting thoughts? If he hears the wind but a little loud, he cannot sleep for fear of his ship at sea. Truly thus a soul by faith rolled on the promise, will find a happy deliverance from that disturbance, which another is pestered with in prayer; wherefore God in particular directs us to lay this burden from our shoulders on his, when we go to pray, that no by-thoughts arising from these our cares, may disturb us. *Be careful for nothing, but let your requests be made known to God*, Philip. iv. As if he had said, leave me to take care for your work, and mind you to do mine; if things go amiss in your estates, names, families, I will take the blame, and give you leave to say God was not careful enough of you. When the males of Israel went to worship God at Jerusalem, that they might not carry distracted minds with them, from the fear of their families left naked behind, without a man to fight for them, if an enemy should come, God takes the special care of their families in their absence, Exod. xxiv. 24. If we have but a faithful servant (who, we believe, will look to our business as carefully as our ownselves), this makes us go forth with a free and quiet spirit, and not trouble ourselves with what is done at home, when we are abroad. O! then, let us be ashamed, if our faith on God's providence be not much more able to ease us of the burthen of distracting care.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

The Fourth and last Cause instanced in, of Wandering Thoughts in Prayer, with its Remedy.

4. THESE wandering thoughts are occasioned by the Christian's non-observance of his heart in the act of prayer. Let him be at never so much cost of preparatory pains before duty, yet if he doth not watch himself narrowly in the duty itself, his heart will give him the slip, and run into a thousand vanities and impertinencies. The mind of man is a nimble creature; in one moment you shall have it in heaven, and in the very next you shall find it on the earth: Like Philip, who, being joined to the eunuch's chariot, on a sudden was carried out of his sight, and found at Azotas, a place far distant thence. Thus our hearts are soon gone away from the duty in hand, and taken a vagary to the furthest part of the world in their wild imaginations; yea, which is worse, sometimes the mind is off and gadding, but the Christian goes on with his lip-labour, and takes no notice that his thoughts are gone astray: As Joseph and Mary were gone a day's journey before they missed their child (who staid behind with other company). Thus the Christian loses his heart in duty, and goes on with a careless formality, that sometimes the prayer is almost done before he observes his heart's seat to be empty, or considers that his soul and spirit hath not bore him company all the way; who, had he but at the first stepping aside of his thoughts, been aware, might have recovered and rescued them out of the hands of those vanities which stole them; as David did his wives and children from the Amalekites, without any great trouble or loss. And therefore, Christian, keep thy heart with all diligence, observe whether it doth its part in the duty, or be as a string that sounds not in the concert. As you do with your children, so you had need to do with your childish mind: Haply they wait on you to church, but when you are set, if not awed by your eye, they are gone, and may be playing all sermon-time in the fields, and you miss them not; to prevent which, you set them before you, that you may see their carriage, and their behaviour. If thou didst thus pray, observing and watching thy thoughts where, and what about, thou wouldst find more composure in thy spirit, than thou dost; nay, do not only observe thy thoughts in duty, but call them to a review after duty. Many go from prayer, too much like boys from school, that think no more of their lesson till they return again. Leave praying, and all thoughts how they have behaved themselves in prayer together, for shame do not

not thus. If thou neglectest to take an account of thyself, consider that thou must give an account both of it, and this thy neglect after it, before thy betters; God himself will have the full hearing thereof. He sets not any about a work, of which he means not to take cognizance how it was done: And were it not better that the audit should be in thy more private court, than thou be called to give up thy account at his dreadful tribunal! Resolve, therefore, to commune with thy heart upon this point; and the sooner thou goest about it, the better it is like to be done; because then the circumstances of the action will be freshest in thy memory. Go not then out of thy closet, till thou hast examined thy heart; if thy thoughts in prayer shall be found to have been in any measure free and entire, thy affections warm and lively, matter of joy will arise to thee, and thanksgiving to God that thou hast escaped the hands of so many rovers and freebooters that lay in wait to make prize of thee. But take heed thou applaudest not thyself for thine own care and circumspection; alas, thou wert not thine own keeper: He that lent his ear to thy prayer, gave thee thy heart to pray, and also kept it up in duty: Say rather, with David, *Who am I, that I should be able to offer so willingly?* If thy heart, upon the review, be found to have played the truant, take shame, that thou beest not put to shame before the Lord. Oh! blush to think thou shouldst be so unfaithful to God and thine own soul, yea, so foolish to run up and down on every idle errand which satan sends thee, and in the mean while neglect thy own work of so great an importance.—The spouse's complaint may fit thy mouth, *They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own I have not kept.* He is an unwise messenger, who, being sent so market to provide food, is drawn by every idle companion to spend both his time and money in vain, and at night comes home without bread for the hungry family. Oh! Christian, was not thy errand to the throne of grace to get new supplies from heaven for thy poor soul! and doth it not grieve thee to think that now thy soul must pinch, for thy playing away praying time and talent, which, as market-money, was put into thy hand to procure a new store? yea, that thou hast been injurious to thy God by taking his name in vain? Thou appearedst in a praying posture, thy hand and voice were lift up to heaven, as if thou meanest to pray; but, like him who said he would go into the vineyard, and did not, thou hast turned a contrary way, and set thy thoughts to work in another field; will not this affect thy heart? Yes surely, and afflict it also, and this affliction of thy spirit will be a sovereign means to excite thy care for the future. The faults which are unobserved, are also uncorrected in the scholar's exercise, and so not like to be mended in the next. Wandering thoughts in prayer are like va-

grants,

grants, no such way to rid the country of one, and the heart of the other, as by giving both the law, the lash I mean.

Quest. Oh! but, saith the Christian, I have used this means, and yet, to the grief of my heart, I am still pestered with them!

Answ. Take a few consolatory words to ease thy aching heart, that groans under the burden of these thy wandering thoughts.

CHAP. XVII.

Some Consolatory Considerations for the Christian dejected over-much for Wandering Thoughts in Prayer.

FIRST, The affliction of thy spirit for them speaks more comfort to thee, than the presence of them discomfort; that thou art annoyed with such troublesome guests, is no more than the best of saints have found and acknowledged. Wherefore did David pray, that *God would unite his heart to fear his name*, but that he found it gadding? What means Paul by his complaint, *When I would do good, evil is present with me*, but that he had not yet got the full mastery of his unruly thoughts? Thou seest it is no new disease thou art troubled with, but such as is common not only to the sons of men, but the children of God, a spot that may be seen on a saint's coat; but they being afflicted for them, speaks one of these two things; and both of them have comfort in their mouth for thee. It proves either that they are satan's injections, and not the birth of thine own heart; or if they steam from thy own heart, yet the spirit of God is the indweller, and these but intruders.

First, The moan thou makest for being yoked to such company, is a sign they are rather sent in by satan, than called in by thee; his injections, rather than the suggestions of thine own heart. Our own thoughts commonly are more taking with, and pleasurable to us: The mother does not more love the fruit of her own body, than we do the product of our minds. Hence our own ways, words, and thoughts, are called our pleasure, Isa. lviii. 13. and therefore possibly they may be shot from his bow, thy heart being so affrighted at them, and wounded for them. Or,

Secondly, If they prove the off-spring of thine own mind, yet thy afflicted soul shews that the spirit and grace of God is the indweller, and these but intruders and involuntary motions, such as in thy deliberate thoughts thou abhorrest. Were they, as I may

so

so say, of thy own house and family, thou wouldst not shew this zeal to shut the door upon them, or shriek out, when they come in upon thee; the wife does not cry out, when husband, children, or servants, come into the room, but when thieves and cut-throats, from whom she looks for nothing but cruelty; it seems they are neither of thine acquaintance, nor likest thou their company by thy behaviour before them. Be not therefore over-troubled; for satan, if he can but disquiet thy mind with false fears, he hath one part of his errand done for which he sends them; these wicked thoughts are upon no other terms with thee, than holy thoughts are in the wicked; as those profit not them, because not entertained; so for the same reason shall not these hurt thee.

Secondly, Know these be the necessary infirmities of thy imperfect state, and so long as thou art faithful to resist and mourn for them, they rather move God's pity to thee, than wrath against thee. 'Tis one thing for a child employed by his father, willingly or negligently to spoil the work he sets him about; and another, when through natural weakness he fails in the exact doing of it. Should a master bid his servant give him a cup of wine, and he should willingly throw both glass and wine on the ground, he might expect his master's just displeasure; but if, through some unsteadiness, it may be the palsy in his hand, he should, notwithstanding all his care, spill some of it in the bringing, an ingenuous master will rather pity him for his disease, than be angry for the wine that is lost; and did God ever give his servants occasion to think him a hard master? Hath he not promised, *that he will spare us, as a father his child that serves him?* From whence come all the apologies which he makes for his people's failings, if not from his merciful heart, interpreting candidly them to proceed rather from their want of skill, than will, power, or desire? *Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* Zech. iv. It is Christ's answer in the behalf of Joshua, whom satan accused for his filthy garments. *The flesh is weak, but the spirit is willing*, Mat. xxvi. 41. was his favourable gloss for his disciples' drowsiness in prayer.

Thirdly, Believers' prayers pass a refining before they come into God's hands. Did he indeed read them with their impertinencies, and take our blotted copy out of our hands, we could not fear too much what the issue might be; but they come under the corrector's hand, our Lord Jesus hath the inspection of them, who sets right all our broken requests, and misplaced petitions, he washes out our blots with his blood, his mediation is the fine searce through which our prayers are bolted, all that is coarse and heterogeneal, he severs from the pure; what is of his own spirit's breathing, he presents, and what our fleshly part added, he hides, that it shall not prejudice us or our prayers. This was

the sweet gospel-truth wrapped up in the *Priest's bearing the sins of their holy offerings*, Exod. xxviii. 36.

Fourthly, Though the presence of these be a great affliction to thee, yet God will make them of singular use to thee. First, To humble thee, and take all glorying from thee, that thou shalt not pride thyself in thy other assistances, which thou wouldst be prone to do, if thy prayer had not this lame foot to humble thee. Secondly, To keep thee wakeful and circumspect in thy Christian course. By thy disturbance from these, thou seest the war is not yet quite done: the *Canannite is yet in the land;* though not master of the field, yet skulking in his holes and fastnesses, out of which he comes like an adder in the path, that by these sudden surprises, and nibbling at thy heel, he may make thee like the rider, fall backward, and so steal a victory unawares of thee, whom he despairs to overcome in a pitched battle by sins more deliberate: And truly, if he dare be so bold as to set upon thee, when in communion with God, so nigh thy rock and castle, doth it not behove thee, Christian, to look about thee, that he gets no greater advantage of thee, when thou art at a further distance from him in thy worldly employments? Thirdly, God will make thee, by these, more merciful to, and less censorious of, thy brethren in greater failings.

Fifthly, In thy faithful conflict with them thou mayest promise thyself, at last, victory over them, but expect this gradually to be done, not at once, nor hastily to be delivered into thy hands. As God said of Israel's enemies. Therefore maintain the fight, faint not at their stubborn resistance; pray and mourn that thou canst pray no better; mourn and fight again; fight, and believe them down, though sometimes they get thee under their feet. God made a promise to Noah after the flood, in which he gave him a sovereignty over the creatures: *The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth*, Gen. ix. 2. But we see many beasts are fierce, savage, and cruel to mankind; yet thus it is fulfilled, that none are so fierce, and unruly, but by man's art and industry they have been, and still are, taken and tamed, as the apostle hath it, James iii. 7. Thus God hath given his saints, by promise, a sovereignty over sin and satan, *He will subdue* both *under your feet*. The dread of the saints shall fall on the proudest devil, and his foot shall be set on the neck of his fiercest lust, yet this will cost hot work before the one or other be effected.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Satan's Third and Last Design upon the Saint's Prayer; with the first Impediment that may obstruct the Acceptation of his Prayer in Heaven.

THIRDLY, The third and last design that satan hath against the saint in this great undertaking of prayer, is to hinder his success therein. He will have thee, Christian, (if he can) one way or other, outwards or homewards; and it comes all to one, whether the ship be taken as it go forth, or as it returns home; nay, of the two, it is the greater loss to be defeated of our expectations, when we look for our prayers to come richly fraught with mercies from heaven.

Now two ways he labours to hinder the success of prayer.

First, He endeavours to hinder the welcome of their prayers with God, that they may be cast as a petition out of court, which God will not look on.

Secondly, If he cannot prevail in this, then he plays an after-game, and will so handle the matter, if possible, that though they have welcome with God, and find gracious reception in heaven, yet, that this be not believed by the saint on earth, but that he gives them for lost, and looks no more after them. Now though this be not a total and final miscarriage of the prayer, yet the devil hath hereby a great advantage, depriving him of the present comfort and benefit which his faith might pay him in, before a return is made of his prayer.

SECT. I.—First, Satan labours to hinder the entertainment of our prayers in heaven. Now our prayers may several ways be stopped at heaven's door, and denied that gracious access, which God useth to give. I speak now of saints' prayers; as for the prayers of the wicked, there is one law for them all, to be cast over the bar, and the door shut upon them. The tree must be good, before the fruit it bears can taste sweet on God's palate. Now the stoppage which the saint's prayer meets withal, springs not from any unwillingness in God to give out his mercy, or any dislike to have beggars at his door. *A Deo placet Deo dare, ut propter hoc omnia creavit, volebat enim habere quæ & pauperibus daret.* God is so delighted with acts of mercy, that therefore he made the world, and all in it, that he might have suitors to beg, and alms to give to those suitors; but from ourselves, we put the stones into the lock, which hinder the turning of prayer's key in it, and so indeed we shut the door of mercy upon ourselves. The devil himself could not immediately hinder a saint's welcome, he

hath not such command of God's ear, did we not put words into his mouth, and help him to a charge against us. The lies which he, as a false accuser, carries to God, shall not prejudice us in God's thoughts, or make our prayers the less acceptable; but if the accusation be true, God will hear it, though he be a wicked spirit that tells the tale, and we his dear children of whom it is told. A father, when he hears of some wicked prank his child hath played, will chide and frown on him, though it be an enemy that told him of it. Now to instance what miscarriages in a saint hinder their audience at the throne of grace.

First, When the thing prayed for is not according to the will of God. We have not a liberty to pray at random for what we will. The throne of grace is not set up that we may come and there vent our sudden distempered passions before God, or to make any saucy motion to him that comes in our head; truly then God should have work enough. If he had promised to sign all our petitions, without any regard to the subject-matter of them, he would too often set his hand against himself, and pass that away, which would be little for his glory to give. Herod was too lavish, when he gave his minion leave to ask what she would, even to half of his kingdom, and he paid dearly for it; for he gave her that head which was more worth than his whole kingdom (for the cutting off his head, lost him his crown). No, we have to do with a wise God, who, to stop the mouth of all such bold beggars, that would ask what unbeseems us to desire, or him to give, hath given a law of prayer, and stinted us to the matter thereof, *When ye pray, say, Our Father*, &c. That is, learn here what you may pray for in faith to receive, 1 John v. 14. *This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* Faith without a promise, is like a foot without firm ground to stand upon. It was well Luther interpreted himself, when he said, *Fiat voluntus mea*, My will be done; *Mea, Domine, quia tua*, My will, Lord, because thine. Now the promise contains this will of God. Be sure thou gatherest all thy flowers of prayer out of this garden, and thou canst not do amiss: But take heed of mingling with them any wild gourd of thy own. Remember the check our Lord gave his disciples when venting their vindictive passion in their prayer: *Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven to consume them? And he said, You know not what manner of spirit ye are of*, Luke ix. 44, 45. They had here an example to countenance their act, but that *heroicus impetus*, and extraordinary spirit, by which Elijah and other of the prophets were acted, is not our standing rule for prayer; that came in them from the spirit of God, which in us may proceed from the spirit of the devil, which is implied in our Saviour's question, *You know not what manner of*

of spirit ye are of: As if he had said, you little think who stirred you up: You had your coal not from God's altar, but from satan's furnace. Oh! let us beware that we be not the devil's messengers, in going to God upon his errand: Which we do, when we pray against the rule, or without a warrant. Belch not out thy unruly passions of anger there, presently to have thine enemies confounded (the disciples' case), nor vent thy intemperate sorrow through impatience, as Job, in the paroxysm of his trouble, begs of God to take away his life in all haste. Take counsel of his word, and *let not thy lip be hasty to utter a matter before the Lord.* Daniel's method was the right, chap. ix. 2. First he goes to the scripture, and searches what the mind of God was concerning the time when he had promised his people a return out of their captivity, which having found, and learned thereby how to lay his plea, then away he goes to besiege the throne of grace, ver. 3. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer*, &c. Art thou sick or poor? In want of any temporal mercy? Go, and enquire upon what terms these are promised, that thy faith may not jet beyond the foundation of the promise, by a peremptory and absolute desire of them, for then thy building will fall, and thou be put to shame, because thou askest more than God ever promised.

CHAP. XIX.

The Second Thing that may hinder the Welcome and Acceptation of a Saint's Prayer.

SECONDLY, Though the subject matter of a saint's prayer be bottomed on the word, yet if the end he aims at be not levelled right, this is a second door at which his prayer will be stopped, though it pass the former: *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.*— Take, I confess, a Christian in his right temper, and he levels at the glory of God; yet as a needle that is touched with load-stone, may (being shaken) be removed from its beloved point to which nature hath espoused it, though trembling till it again recovers it: So a gracious soul may, in a particular act and request, vary from this end, being jogged by satan, yea, disturbed by an enemy nearer home, his own unmortified corruption. Truly he is a rare archer that ever hits this white. Do you not think it possible for a saint in distress of body and spirit, to pray for health in the one, and comfort in the other, with too selfish a respect had to

his own ease and quiet? Yes sure, and to pray for gifts and assistance in some eminent service, with an eye asquint to his own credit and applause; to pray for a child with too inordinate a desire, that the honour of his house may be built up in him. I know none so seasoned with grace, as not to be subject to such warpings of spirit: and this may be understood as the sense, in part, of that expression, Psal. lxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* For though to desire our own health, peace, and reputation, be not an iniquity, when contained within the banks that God hath set, yet when they overflow, and dare to such a height lift up, as to over-top the glory of God, yea, to stand but in a level with it, they are a great abomination. That which in the first or second degree is wholesome food, would be rank poison in the fourth or fifth; therefore, Christian, catechize thyself before thou prayest, O my soul, what sends thee on this errand! know but thy own mind, what thou prayest for, and thou mayest soon know God's mind, how thou shalt speed. Secure God his glory, and thou mayest carry away the mercy with thee. Had Adonijah asked Abishag out of love to her person, and not rather out of love to the crown, it is like Solomon would not have denied the banns between them, but this wise prince observed his drift to make her but a step to his getting into the throne, which he ambitiously thirsted for, and therefore his request was denied with so much disdain. Look that when thy petition is loyal, there be not treason in thy end and aim; if there be, he will find it out.

Quest. When shall I know that I aim at God or self in prayer?

Answ. This will commonly appear by the posture of our heart, when God delays, or denies the thing we pray for. A soul that can acquiesce, and patiently bear a delay or denial; I speak now of such mercies as are of an inferior nature, not necessary to salvation, and so not absolutely promised, gives a hopeful testimony, that the glory of God weighs more in his thoughts, than his own private interest, or accommodation. A selfish heart is both peremptory and hasty; it must have the thing it cries for, and that quickly too, or else it faints or chides, falls down in a swoon, or breaks out into murmuring complaints, not sparing to fall foul on the promises and attributes of God himself. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?* Isaiah lviii. 3. Now from whence come both these, but from an over-valuing of ourselves? Which makes us clash with God's glory, that may be more advanced by these delays and denials, than if we had the thing we so earnestly desire. God was more glorified in denying Christ himself his life, than if he had let that bitter cup pass without his tasting of it, which Christ (John xii. 28.) understanding fully, resigned

resigned himself thereunto, saying, *Father, glorify thyself; not my will, but thy will be done.* As if he had said, I would not save my life, to lose thee the least of thy glory: This is the copy we should all write after. Indeed if our distempered hearts be so wilful and hasty, as not to be content with what, and that when it pleaseth God also, he should not love us in gratifying such desires, for thereby he would but nourish our distemper, which is better cured by starving, than feeding it.

CHAP. XX.

Contains the Third and Fourth Block that may lie in the way of a Saint's Prayer.

THIRDLY, The Christian's prayer may miscarry, when with his prayer he joins not a diligent use of the means: We must not think to lie upon God, as some lazy people do on their rich kindred, to be always begging of him, but not put forth our hand to work in the use of means. God hath appointed prayer as a help to our diligence, not as a cloak for our sloth. Idle beggars are welcome neither to God's door nor man's. What! wilt thou lift up thy hands to God in prayer, and then put them in thy pocket! Doth not God forbid our charity to him that worketh not? *We command you, if any will not work, neither should he eat,* 2 Thes. iii. 10. And will he encourage that idleness in thee, which he would have punished by us? It is a good gloss of Bernard upon that of Jeremiah, Lam. iii. 41. *Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens. Qui orat et laborat, ille cor levat ad Deum cum manibus;* he that prayeth, and is diligent in the use of means, is the person that lifts up his heart with his hands to God. Look, therefore, Christian, thou minglest thy sweat with thy tears, thy labour with thy prayers. If thy prayer doth not set thee on work, neither will it set thy God at work for thee. Is it a lust thou art praying against? And dost thou sit down idle to see whether it will now die alone? Will that prayer slay one lust, that lets another (thy sloth I mean) live under its nose? As God will not save thy soul, so neither will he destroy thy sin, unless thy hand also be put to the work. See how God raised Joshua from off the earth, where he lay praying and mourning for Israel's defeat, Josh. vii. 10. *Get thee up, wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned,* &c. ver. 12. *Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies,* &c. ver. 13. *Up, sanctify the people.* O how oft

may God rouse us up from our knees, and say, Why lie ye here with your lazy prayers! you have sinned in not taking my counsel, and obeying my orders; I bade you watch, as well as pray; why do you not one as well as the other? My command obliges you to fly from the snare that satan lays for you, as well as pray against it: therefore it is you cannot stand before your lusts.—Moses durst not go to God with a prayer in behalf of sinning Israel, till he had shewn his zeal for God against their sin, and then he goes and speeds; see Exod. xxxii. 25. compared with ver. 31. Dost think to walk loosely all day, yielding thyself, and betraying the glory of God into the hands of thy lust, and then mend all with a prayer at night? Alas, thy cowardice and sloth will get to heaven before thy prayer, and put thee to shame when thou comest on such an errand.

Fourthly, The saint's prayer may miscarry from some secret grudge that is lodged in his heart against his brother. Anger and wrath are strange fire to put to our incense. It is a law writ upon every gate of God's house (every ordinance I mean) at which we are to enter into communion with God, that we must love our brethren. When we go to hear the word, what is the caveat, but that we should *lay aside all malice, envy, evil speaking, and, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.* The gospel will not speak peace to a wrathful spirit: Anger and malice, like a salt corroding humour in the stomach, make us puke and cast up the milk of the word, that it cannot stay with us for nourishment. Is it the gospel-supper thou sittest at? This is a love feast; and though it may be eaten with the bitter herbs of sin's sorrow, yet not with the sour leaven of wrath and malice, 1 Cor. xi. 18. *When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you,* &c. Now mark what follows, ver. 20. *This is not to eat the Lord's Supper.* Christ will not communicate with a wrangling jangling company. When such guests come, he riseth from his own table, as David's children did from Absalom's, upon the murder of their brother Amnon, 1 Sam. xiii. 29. And for prayer, you know the law thereof, *Lift up pure hands without wrath and doubting,* 1 Tim. ii. 8. implying, that it is impossible to pray in faith and in wrath.—*Duobus modis oratio impeditur, si ad huc homo mala committit, aut si committenti in se ex toto corde non dimittit:* Our prayer may be hindered two ways; by lying in any sin we commit against God: Or in wrath, by not forgiving our brother's committed against us. Those two in our Lord's prayer cannot be divorced; Forgive us as we forgive. This is that *ferrum in vulnere* (as the same father hath it) which makes our prayers as ineffectual to us, as the plaister is to the wound in which the bullet still remains.

Now

Now the reason why God is so curious in this point, is, because himself is so gracious; and he, being Love, can bid none welcome that are not in love. The heathens had such a notion, that the gods would not like the sacrifice or service of any but such as were like themselves. And therefore, to the sacrifice of Hercules, none were to be admitted that were dwarfs. To the sacrifice of Bacchus, a merry god, none that were sad and pensive, as not suiting their genius. An excellent truth may be drawn from this their folly: He that would like and please God, must be like to God. Now our God is a God of peace; our heavenly Father merciful; and therefore to him none can have friendly access, but those that are children of peace, and merciful as their Father is. O watch, then, thy heart, that satan's fire-balls (which upon every little occasion he will be throwing in at thy window) take not hold of thy spirit, to kindle any heart-burning in thee against thy brother. If at any time thou seest the least smoke, or smellest the least scent of this fire in thy bosom, sleep not till thou hast quenched it; be more careful to lay this fire in thy heart aside, when thou goest to bed, than the other that is on thy hearth. How canst thou by prayer commit thyself into God's hands that night, wherein thou carriest a spark thereof smothered in thy breast? *Irasci, hominis; iram non perficere, Christiani est*, Jerome. As a frail man, thou canst not hinder, but such a spark may light on thee, yet if thou wilt prove thyself a Christian, thou must quench it. Nay more, if thou wilt shew thyself a Christian, and have thy prayer find God's ear or heart open to it, thou must do thy utmost to quench it in thy brother's heart, as well as thy own. It is not enough that thou carriest peace in thy heart to him, except thou endeavourest that he may be at peace with thee also. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest thy brother hath ought against thee*, &c. Mat. v. 23. Hierome brings in the Christian here expostulating his cause with God, why he will not hear his prayer, *Domine, quare nonvis suscipere munus meum? quid ad me attinet? non est in mea potestate, si frater meus habet aliquid contra me. What is it to me, Lord, that my brother is offended with me? I cannot help that; wilt thou not receive my gift for his fault?* To whom he brings in God thus answering: *Et quid dicis male serve? Intelligo animum tuum; Nihil habes? Amas eum? Quare ergo salvere eum non vis? Vade, roga eum, ne ille contra te habeat ut salvari possit. What is it, O thou naughty servant, thou sayest? I understand thy meaning; what is it to thee? Hast thou nothing against him? Dost thou love him? Wherefore, then, wouldst thou not save his soul? Go and beg of him to be at peace with thee, that thy brother's soul may be saved.* I speak the more of this particular, being sensible what

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an hour, or rather age of temptation we live in, by reason of the sad differences of judgment among Christians, which have distilled upon their affections so great a distaste one to another, as exulcerates them into wrath and bitterness; yea, a wonderful cure it will be, if it can be prevented from ending in an irrecoverable consumption of love among a great part of this present generation: especially considering what malignity is dropt into these church-contentions by those national divisions also that have fallen in with them, and which drew so bad a sword among us, as for many years could find no other sheath but the bowels of this then miserable nation. Oh what grudges, animosities, and heart-burnings have these two produced? The sword, blessed be God, is at last got into its scabbard of peace; but have we not cause to wish that it had been cleaner wiped when put up, and not such an implacable spirit of revenge and malice to be found remaining among many of us, as, alas, is too common to be met with every where? The storm without is over, blessed be God, but is it not too high within some of our breasts? The flood of national calamities is assuaged, but now the tide is down and gone, is there not a deal of this filth (to name no other), uncharitable jealousies, bitterness, wrath and revenge, left behind upon our hearts? Enough to breed another plague and judgment among us, if a flood of national repentance does not wash away what the sea of war and other confusions have cast up. But if this were all the mischief they are like to do us, our case is sad enough; they will hinder our prayers; for God will not accept such sacrifices as are kindled with the fire of wrath.

CHAP. XXI.

Contains the Fifth Cause of a Saint's Prayer miscarrying, Want of Faith; as also what to Pray in Faith imports.

FIFTHLY, The Christian's prayer may miscarry for want of faith. Prayer is the bow, the promise is the arrow, and faith the hand which draws the bow, and sends this arrow with the heart's message to heaven. The bow without the arrow, is of no use, and the arrow without the bow, as little worth; and both, without the strength of the hand, to no purpose. Neither the promise without prayer, nor prayer without the promise, nor both without faith, avail the Christian any thing. So that what was said of the Israelites, *that they could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief*, the same may be said of many of our prayers, they

they cannot enter heaven with acceptation, because they are not put up in faith. Now faith may be considered with respect to the person praying, or to the prayer put up.

First, The person must be a believer, but this not enough: There must be act of faith exerted in the prayer, as well as the habit of faith dwelling in the person, Mark xi. 24. *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* If the thing be not to be found in the promise that we desire, it is a sin to pray for it; if it be, it is a sin not to believe, when we pray for it, and that no small one, because thereby we both profane an ordinance, and asperse the name of the great God.

SECT. I.—*Quest.* But what is it to pray in faith?

Answ. First, *Negatively.* It is not to believe that the very thing in specie, or in its proper kind that we pray for, shall be always given. Christ prayed in faith, and was heard, Heb. v.—He believed not the thing in kind to be given, neither was it, yet his prayer was answered; therefore be sure thou learnest the right method of acting thy faith in prayer, which must be taken from the nature of the promise thou puttest in suit. As water receives its figure (round or square) from the vessel it is poured into; so our faith is to be shaped by the promise; if that be absolute (as things necessary to salvation are), then thy faith may expect the very thing promised; if otherwise, then thou art not to limit thy faith to the thing itself, but expect money or money-worth; health, or as good as health; deliverance, or better than deliverance. An absolute faith on a conditional promise (without an immediate revelation, which we must not look for) is fancy, not faith; to commit a sin, not act a grace, this is to be free on God's purse without a grant; for we put more in the conclusion of our faith, than is in the premises of the promise; and this is as bad divinity as logic.

SECT. II.—Secondly, *Positively.* To pray in faith, is to ask of God in the name of Christ, what he hath promised, relying on his power and truth for performance, without binding him up to time, manner, or means.

First, We must ask what God hath promised, or else we choose for ourselves, and not beg; we subject God's will to ours, and not ours to his; we forge a bond, and then claim it as debt, which is a horrible presumption! he that is his own promiser, must be his own paymaster.

Secondly, To pray in faith, it is required that we pray in Christ's name; as there can be no faith but on a promise, so no promise can be claimed but in his name, because they are all both made to him, and performed for him. They are made to him, the covenant being struck with him: *In hope of eternal life.*

life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, Tit. i. 2. And there was none then existing but Christ to whom the promise could be made. So that as the child claims his estate in right of his father that purchased it; so we come to our right in the promise, as heirs of, and co-heirs with Christ. And as the promise was made to him, so it is performed for him, because his blood shed was the condition of the obligation upon which God acknowledged the debt to Christ, and bound himself to perform all the articles of the covenant to his heirs, orderly claiming them at his hands in his name. It is not, therefore, enough boldly to urge God with a promise; *Pardon, Lord, for thou hast promised it; grace and glory, for thou hast promised them;* but we must, if we mean to lay our plea legally (I mean, according to the law of faith) plead for these under the protection of his name. Thus Daniel ix. 17. that holy man laid the stress of his prayer on Christ, *Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.*

SECT. III.—Thirdly, To this praying in faith is required a relying on God, through Christ, for a gracious answer. Let the former be done, and the creature fail in this, he prays not in faith, but takes the name of God and Christ in vain. This act of relying is the taking hold on God in prayer, Isa. lxiv. When mariners, in a storm, cast out their anchor, and it comes home again, without taking hold on the firm ground, so as to stay the ship, and bear it up against the violence of the waves, it gives them no help: so neither doth a handless prayer that takes no hold on God. Therefore you shall find that when a Christian speeds well in prayer, his happy success is attributed not to naked prayer, but as cloathed and empowered with this act of recumbency upon God, 2 Chron. xiii. 14. *They cried unto the Lord:* Now see, ver. 18. *The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.* He doth but lie in prayer, that doth not rely on God after praying. What he seems to give with one hand to God, he takes from him with another, which is no better than a mocking of God. By praying, we pretend to expect good from him; by not relying, we blot this out, and declare we look for no such matter.

Now this reliance of the soul, hath a twofold way whereby it fastens on God, like the anchor's double hook.

First, It takes hold on the power of God; thus Christ in his agony, *offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death.* In prayer, we open our case to God, declare how sinful, weak, shiftless creatures we are, and then we commit our cause to God. Now, as none will put that to another's keeping, which he thinks safe

safe in his own hands; so neither will any deliver it to another, of whose ability he is not first persuaded to effect that which himself is unable to do. See Eliphaz his counsel to Job, chap. v. 8. *I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause.* As if he had said, If I were in your case, I will tell you what course I would take; I would not look this way, or that, but speedily haste me to the throne of grace; and when once I had told God my very heart, I would trouble myself no more, but commit my cause to him, and discharge my heart of the burden of all its troublesome thoughts: But under what notion would he do all this? The next words will tell us, *Unto God would I commit my cause, which does great things without number.*— First he would bottom his faith on God as able to do great things, and then leaving his request lodged in the arms of such power, he doubted not but he would cast all care away, and enjoy the serenity of his mind, whatever his condition was. Indeed this is the first stone faith lays in her building. And an error in the foundation will make the whole house stand weak. Be sure, therefore, thou layest this bottom stone with thy greatest care. Oh! how unbecoming is it to have a great God, and a little faith on this great God! A strong God, and a weak faith on his almighty power! Unbelief here ravisheth and offereth violence to the very light of nature: For, *his eternal power and Godhead are known by the visible things of the creation*, Rom. i. What is not he able to do, that could make so goodly a fabric without materials, tools, or workmen! *Crucifige illud verbum, potestne?* Away with that question which so grates the ears of the Almighty: Can he pardon? What cannot he do, that can do what he will!

Secondly, It takes hold on the faithfulness of God to perform the promise: We are directed, in committing ourselves to him, to eye his faithfulness; *As unto a faithful Creator*, 1 Pet. iv. 19. The saints' faith hath been remarkable in staying themselves on this, while yet the mercy they prayed for, lay asleep in its causes: Psal. lxv. 1. *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed.* See, he stands with his instrument strung, and tuned, ready to strike up, and bring God in with the music of his praise, when he shall come with an answer to his prayer, not the least doubting, but that he shall use it upon that joyful occasion; for he speaks without ifs and ands; *Unto thee shall the vow be performed, O thou that hearest prayer:* And yet that good day was not come; for even then he cries out, *Iniquities prevail against me!* So Psalm cxl. 12. *I know the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.* Why? how comes he so confident? ver. 13. *Surely the righteous shall give thanks to thy name.* As if he had

had said, Thou hast a name for a gracious and faithful God in thy promise, and this thou wilt never suffer to be blotted by failing thy word: (Christian) thou mayest venture all thou art worth on the public faith of heaven; *His words are pure, as silver tried seven times in a furnace.* He that will not suffer a liar, or covenant-breaker, to set foot on his holy hill, will much less suffer any one thought of falseness or unfaithfulness to enter into his own most holy heart.

CHAP. XXII.

Four Rules whereby we may know whether we act Faith in Prayer or no.

Quest. BUT how may I know when I thus act faith in prayer?

Ans. First, By the serenity and composure of thy spirit after prayer. Faith may live in a storm, but it will not suffer a storm to live in it. As faith rises, so the blustering wind of discontented troublesome thoughts go down. In the same proportion that there is faith in the heart, there is peace also; they are joined together, *Quietness and confidence*, Isa. xxx. 15. *In returning shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength;* therefore called *peace in believing*, Rom. xv. 13. Even where it is weakest, it will not let the unquietness of the heart pass without a chiding, Psal. xlii. *Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? trust still in God.* What! soul! no sooner off thy knees but clamorous! Hast not thou made thy moan to a God able to help thee, and will not that ease thee! Faith disburdens the soul in prayer of that which oppresses it: whereas the unbelieving soul still carries about it the cause of its trouble, because it had not strength to cast forth its sorrows, and roll its cares upon God in the duty. Christian, dost thou carry away the same burden on thy back from prayer, which thou didst bring to it? Surely thou didst want faith to lift it off thy shoulder.—Had faith been there, and that been active and lively, it would have bestowed this elsewhere, and brought thee away with a light heart: As Hannah, who rose from praying *to eat, and her countenance was no more sad.* And as Christ, who kneeled down with as sorrowful a heart as ever any, but comes off with a holy courage to go and meet his approaching death, and his bloody enemies now on the way to attack him. *Arise*, saith he to his disciples, *let us be going, behold he is at hand that doth betray me*, Mat. xxvi. May it not put us to the blush to think, that

that we should come less satisfied from God's presence, than we do sometimes from a sorry man? If you were poor, and had a rich friend that bids you send your children to him, and he will provide for them; would not this ease your mind of all your cares and distracting thoughts concerning their maintenance? And doth not God promise more than this comes to, when he bids us *be careful for nothing, but let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving?*

Secondly, Dost thou continue praying even when God continues to deny? An unbelieving heart may have some mettle at hand, but will be sure to jade in a long journey. Faith will throw in the net of prayer again and again, as long as God commands, and the promise encourageth. The grey-hound hunts by sight; when he cannot see his game, he gives over running; but the true hound by scent, he hunts over hedge and ditch, though he sees not the hare he pursues all the day long. An unbelieving heart may be is drawn out upon some visible probabilities, and sensible hopes of a mercy coming, to pray, but when these are out of sight, his heart fails him; but faith keeps the scent of the promise, and gives not over the chace.

Thirdly, Dost thou stint God, or canst thou trust him to answer thy prayer in his own way without thy prescription? When we deal with a man, whose ability or faithfulness we have in doubt, then we labour to make sure of him by tying him up to our terms: But if we stand assured of their power and truth, we leave them to themselves. Thus the patient sends for the physician, desires his help, but leaves him to write his own bill.—The merchant sends over his goods to his factor, and relies on him to make such returns as his wisdom tells him will come to the best market. Thus the believing soul, when he hath opened his heart to God in prayer, resigns himself to the goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness of God, to return an answer: *Remember me, O God,* saith Nehemiah, *concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy,* chap. xiii. 22. See here, this good man makes bold to be God's remembrancer, but dares not be his counsellor or prescriber; he remits the shaping of the answer *to the greatness of his mercy.* Hence it follows, that whatever way God cometh in, the believing soul bids him welcome. Doth he pray for health, and miss of that? yet he blesseth God for support under sickness. Doth he pray for his children, and they notwithstanding prove a cross? yet he finds an answer another way, and satisfies himself with it: After many a prayer that David had put up, no doubt for his family, we find him entertaining an answer to those prayers with a composed spirit, though they came not in at the fore-door, (by having the mercy in the letter), 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Though my house be not*

so,

so, yet God hath made a covenant with me, &c. and this he tells us, *is all his desire.* Indeed a believer cannot miss his desires, Psal. cxlv. *He will fulfil the desires of those that fear him;* because they disown those desires which clash with God's will. Who could pray more fervently for their children, than Job did for his? He was with God for them every day; but after all his religious care of them, he meets with heavy tidings, and hears them to be made a sacrifice by death, for whom he had offered up so many sacrifices to God; yet doth he not foolishly charge God, or say it was in vain that he prayed: No, that ointment was not lost, the savour whereof was poured into his own soul, from the posture of which he might read a gracious answer, in the supporting grace that enabled him to love and bless God over the grave-stone of his slain children.

Fourthly, By the soul's comporting itself towards the means used for obtaining the mercy prayed for.

First, If thou prayest in faith, it will set thee to use other means besides prayer. Mark how the apostle joins these together, Rom. xii. 11, 12. *Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, continuing instant in prayer.* As faith useth her wings of prayer to fly to heaven, so she useth her feet of duty and obedience, with which she walks and bestirs herself on earth.

Secondly, Faith will make thee, as use means, so to be choice of the means thou usest for the obtaining what thou bespeakest of God in prayer. Faith is a working grace, but it will be set on work by none but God. Am I in God's way, saith faith? Is this the means he hath appointed? If it be not, away he turns from it, disdaining to work with any of the devil's tools. God can answer my prayer, saith the believer, without the help of my sin. If riches be good for me, I need not be at the cost to purchase them with a lie or a cheat. If health be a mercy, he can send me it, though I advise not with the devil's doctors. If joy and comfort, there is no need to take down the devil's music. If times be evil, he can hide me; without running under the skirt of this great man, and that, by base flattery and dissimulation.— When Ezra had committed himself and his company to God (now on their march towards Jerusalem) by a solemn day of fasting and prayer, and had made a holy boast of his God, what he would do for them that seek him; he thought it both unbeseeming his professed faith, and also dishonourable to his God, whom he had so magnified in the hearing of the Persian king, to beg any armed troops for a convoy to them in their way, lest his faith should be brought into suspicion for any empty bravado, and groundless confidence; chap. viii. 22. *I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the*

the way: because we spake unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.

Thirdly, If thou actest faith in prayer, thy faith will make thee not only choice of the means thou usest, but curious and careful in using the means that God chuseth for thee. Thou wilt be afraid lest it should stand in God's light, by stealing thy confidence from him to trust in it. Faith will teach thee to use means as God's ordinance, but rely on God to bless it. While faith's hand is on the plough, her eye is in heaven: *Annus non ager facit fructum;* the influences of heaven, not the tillage of the husbandman, make it a fruitful year. Sometimes the physician appoints a powder to be taken in wine or beer: Now it is not the beer or wine that does the cure, but the powder, which they are only used to convey and carry into the stomach. Thus mercy is handed over to us by the blessing of God in the use of means, yet think not the means to do it, but the blessing of God mingled with it, and infused into it.

Fourthly, and Lastly, If thou actest faith in prayer, as thou wilt be careful to improve means when God provides them, so thou wilt not suspend thy faith, when God denies them. The believing soul dares not trust to the means when he hath them, therefore he dares not distrust God when he wants them. Faith knows though God useth means, yet he needs none. The sun and showers are the means he useth for the growth of the grass and herbs; yet he made these to grow out of the earth, Gen. i. 11. before there was sun or rain. Ploughing and sowing is the ordinary means whereby man is provided with bread: but he fed Israel with bread without their pains and husbandry. Ships, the means to waft us over the seas; but God carried Israel through the Red Sea without ship or boat. May be times are hard, and thou art poor; thy charge is great, and thy comings-in little; with the widow in the prophet, thou art making thy last cake of the little meal that is left; to reason and sense thou must either beg, steal, or die. Canst thou now, upon praying to thy God, wait upon his promise, which tells thee, *Verily, thou shalt be fed?* Psal. xxxvii. And on his providence, which records his care of the sparrows, on purpose to assure us he will much more provide for his children? or at least, dost thou chide thy heart for its distrustful fears after praying, charging it to hope in God, to whom thou hast made thy moan? Truly if thy heart hath not some hold on God after duty, to stay it, more than before in this thy streight; either thou hast no faith, or if thou hast faith, thou didst not act it in that prayer. True faith will either expel these dejections of heart, or at least protest against them.

CHAP. XXIII.

The Second Policy or Stratagem, with which Satan labours to Defeat the Praying Saint, viz. To buz false Fears into his Ear, that his Prayer is not heard.

SECONDLY, Now we come to the second stratagem that satan useth to hinder the success of the Christian's prayer (which I called a partial hindrance or miscarriage thereof) when the prayer itself is not lost (which comes to pass only when it finds not acceptance with God), but when the Christian doth not believe on earth, that his prayer is heard in heaven (though indeed it is); and so by his questoning thereof, he loseth the revenue of that present peace, which otherwise would be paid in unto him, from the expectation of its certain return with a joyful answer: As a merchant that gives his ship for cast away, when indeed it is safe, and richly laden, (only stays for a fair wind) he not knowing or believing this, puts himself to as much trouble and sorrow, as if it were in truth as he feared. Fancy and imagination, even when without ground and reason, is able to produce real effects and sad consequences in the minds of men. The false news of Joseph's death caused as much sorrow to old Jacob, yea, more, than if he had seen him laid out, and followed him to the grave. The jailor, from a fear his prisoners were gone, and he accountable for them, had foredone himself by falling upon his own sword, if Paul had not seasonably cried out, *We are all here, do thyself no harm.* And truly our unbelieving fears have no less power upon our hearts; they rob the Christian of the joy of his life (and man is but a sour piece of clay when that is gone); it is not praying, but believing prayer is heard, that will make a glad heart, and a chearful countenance. Hannah often prayed, she was acquainted with the work many years, yet never had the burden of her spirit taken off, till she had faith she should speed: Yea, moreover, they weaken the spirit of prayer; he that expects little from prayer, will not be much in prayer. That trade is best tended, which it is hoped will pay a man best for his pains in it. *Who is there among you*, saith God, *that would shut the doors for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on my altar for nought*, Mal. i. 11. The husbandman throws his seed freely, because he sows in hope; and his preciousest seed on his fattest soil, because there he looks to find it again with the greatest increase. This made David like praying work so well, that he would never leave it; *I have prayed, and the Lord hath heard, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.* As a merchant, finding

finding his sweet gain come trouling in, converts his whole estate into stock: so David devotes himself wholly to prayer, *For my love, they are my adversaries*, Psal. cix. 2. *But I was prayer*, Heb. This was the only weapon I lift up for my defence against all their darts: Whereas unbelief betrays the soul unto many uncomely thoughts of God, which reflect sadly upon his name, so as to weaken his reputation in the creature's thoughts, and bring him either to a disuse of this duty, or hopeless performance of it; and this satan loves as his life. When a merchant thinks his goods miscarry, he grows presently jealous of his factor, questioning his care, faithfulness, or ability to dispatch his business; such whisperings we shall hear, if we listen to our unbelieving hearts sometimes, when our prayers make not so short and quick a voyage as we desire. It is a high charge that Job brought against God (though he lived to see he had little reason to do it: yea, afterwards charged himself for charging God), *I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and thou regardest me not*, Job xxx. 20. This holy man was now as deep in God's books, and as great a favourite with him, as ever, yet so far had satan wound into him, as to make him listen unto those false reports which he brought unto him of God, (taking the advantage of his present cloudy providence to colour his calumnies) in so much that he began to give credit unto this liar. Now if this may become a stone of offence to a Job, how much more mayest thou fear dashing thy foot against it? Let it be thy care to counter-mine satan in this his spightful plot against God and thee. Surely it should not be a little matter that makes thee throw up thy prayers, and give away so rich an adventure as thou hast swimming in this bottom. Esau hath the brand of a profane person, for so cheaply parting with his inheritance; if thou beest a believer, thou art an heir of promise, and amongst promises this is not the least, That what thou askest in Christ's name, believing, thou shalt receive: Now it is too like his profaneness to part with this piece of thy heritage (which thou canst not do without impeaching the faithfulness of God, that gave thee an estate in the promise). We highly commend Job for his heroic resolution at another time; chap. xxvii. 5. *God forbid that I should justify you; till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.* How much more shouldst thou say to satan, God forbid that I should justify thee, thou wicked fiend, or thy false charge against my God; I will hold fast his integrity and faithfulness till I die.—Surely Daniel, who ventured his life, rather than not pray, would have parted with a thousand lives, rather than have given his prayers for lost, and thereby have blotted the good name of God, whose faithfulness stands bound to return every prayer of faith with a gracious answer into the saint's bosom.

But the more to fortify you against this design of satan, let us enquire into a few of those arguments with which satan (abusing the Christian's credulity) leads him into this temptation, if not absolutely to conclude, yet unbelievingly to dispute and question it in his heart, whether his prayer be heard or no. I shall reduce them to three heads.

First. The first argument by which he scruples the Christian, and nourishes his unbelieving fears, is taken from those sinful infirmities that cleave to his person and prayer.

Secondly, From the deportment of God to him in and after prayer.

Thirdly, From the common providence of God, that dispenseth the same things to the wicked without praying, which the saints receive praying.

CHAP. XXIV.

Arms the Saint against Satan's first Cavil at his Prayers.

FIRST, Satan makes the Christian out of love with himself and duty, from the sinful infirmities cleaving to both, thereby to quash his hope of any favourable reception that his prayer hath found in heaven. What! thy stammering prayers make music in God's ear! Will the Lord foul his fingers with thy besmeared duties! If thou wert a Samuel or Daniel, and couldst claim thy place among those worthies that are renowned for the eminent service they have done God in their generation, then thou mightest hope to have the ear of God to thy suit; but thou, alas, art a puny stripling, a froward child, in whom there is more sin than grace to be found; and dost thou think to be heard?

Truly though this argument weighs little, having no countenance from the tenor of the covenant, whose privileges are not impropriated to a few favourites more eminent in grace than their brethren, but stand open to the whole family, it being a common salvation, and like precious faith, that all the saints partake of; yet is it the great bug-bear with which many of them are scared.

A word or two, therefore, to arm thee against it; only this premised (which I must take for granted) that these sinful infirmities are lamented, and not cockered by thee, that indeed would turn infirmity into presumption; as also that thou neglectest not to apply the most effectual means for their cure, though as in hereditary diseases, all the physic thou takest, will not here perfectly

fectly rid thee of them. This granted, for thy comfort know, they are not so offensive to God, as to thyself. Thy prayers pass such a refining in Christ's mediation, that their ill scent is taken away.

Doth thy scruple arise from the sinful failings of thy daily conversation and Christian course? To remove this, observe how the spirit of God, when he instanceth in Elias, as a person whose prayers were exceedingly prevalent with God, doth not describe him by the transcendency of his grace above others, but by his infirmities like unto them. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not*, James v. 17. As if God should say, Were I so curious in my scrutiny as you fear, Elias his prayer would have been stopped, for he was not without his infirmities.

How many failings do we find in David's unseemly carriage before Achish, for which he was turned out of the king's presence under the notion of a madman? Yet his prayer at that time, when he betrayed so many unbelieving fears, found favour with God, Psalm xxxiv. 4. *I sought the Lord; he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* Read the title, and you shall find it, *A Psalm of David, who changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.* Are they the sinful infirmities which escape thee in the duty of prayer? Canst thou find more in any prayer thou puttest up, than were in the disciples for one so short? Where they exercised so little faith, that Christ calls it *no faith*, Mark iv. 40. *Why are ye so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?* Yea, they pray to Christ, and chide him in the same breath, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* Yet Christ could find sincerity hid (like Saul) in this stuff of their infirmities, and granted their request. It is true he rebuked them, but it is as true that he rebuked the wind also.

God's promise for hearing of prayer, shall not be made void by the saint's weakness in prayer: Yea, for thy further comfort, know, that the less power these have to shake or disturb thy spirit in expecting a gracious answer, the more kindly will God take it at thy hand. *Abraham* (it is said) *believed, not considering his own body, or the deadness of Sarah's womb;* and for this was highly commended, because he thereby did signally glorify the power of God, to which he believed their bodily indisposition should not be any obstacle. Truly, thus it will be highly pleasing to God, if thou canst rely, not staggering at thy spiritual indispositions, and that deadness of thy heart which rises up as a great objection in thy thoughts against the success of thy prayer: For by this, thou givest Christ both the honour of his

death, by which he purchased this free access for thy weak prayers to the throne of grace, and also of his intercession, which clarifies them from all their sinful mixtures.

CHAP. XXV.

Contains a Three-fold Argument which Satan draws from God's Deportment to the Christian, in and after Prayer, to make him question its Acceptance.

SECONDLY, Satan draws his argument from God's deportment to the soul in and after prayer; in which three things he commonly insists upon, by them to create trouble to the Christian's thoughts.

First, His silence, which he would have the Christian interpret to be God's slighting or disregarding of him and his prayer.

Secondly, His frowns, from which he would have him conclude neither he nor his duty are accepted.

Thirdly, His not giving the mercy in kind; and this, he tells the Christian, amounts to a denial.

SECT. I.—First, His silence after prayer.

As wicked men sometimes sin, and God keeps silence, which makes them bold to think God approves of them and their way: So sometimes a gracious soul prays, and God holds his peace here also; and the poor soul begins to fear, that neither his person nor his duty are approved of God. Now satan, knowing what thoughts are like to rise in the Christian's own heart, falls in, and joins issue with the Christian's bosom-enemy, labouring to confirm him in these his unbelieving fears.

To disentangle and help thee out of this briar:

First, Learn to distinguish betwixt God's hearing, and his answering the saint's prayer.

Every faithful prayer is heard, and makes an acceptable report in God's ear as soon as it is shot; but God doth not always thus speedily answer it. The father, at the reading of his son's letter (which comes haply on some begging errand), likes the motion, his heart closeth with it, and a grant is there passed; but takes his own time to send his dispatch, and let his son know this. Princes have their books of remembrance, wherein they write the names of their favourites whom they intend to prefer, haply some years before their gracious purpose opens itself to them. Mordecai's name stood in Ahashuerus' book some while before his honour was conferred. Thus God records the names of

of his saints and their prayers. *The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, of them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name*, Mal. iii. 16. But they hear not of God in his providential answer haply a long time after. Abraham prays for a child, and is heard, but how many years interpose before he hath him in his arms? Truly so many, that he goes in to Hagar (partly by his wife's counsel, and by his own weakness), to obtain that with a by-blow, for which God himself had undertaken.

Take heed, Christian, thou beest not led into this temptation, to question whether God hears thee, because thou hearest not from him presently. Be patient, and thou shalt find, the longer a mercy goes before its delivery, the more perfect it will come forth at last. God gave a speedy answer to Abraham for his son Ishmael; *Oh! that Ishmael might live! I have heard thee*, saith God, *concerning Ishmael*, Gen. xvii. 20. Indeed he flourished, and spread into a great nation, before Isaac's stem almost budded. What a small number was the family of Jacob at their going down into Egypt? But when the date of God's bond was near expiring, and the time of the promise grew nigh, then God paid interest for his stay. None gain more at the throne of grace, than those who trade for time, and can forbear the payment of a mercy longest.

Secondly, Consider, when thou findest the deepest silence in God's providence concerning the thing prayed for, then thou hast a loud answer in the promise.

Say not, therefore, Who shall ascend to heaven to bring thee intelligence whether thy prayer hath got safe thither, and had favourable audience in God's ear? God himself hath saved thee this labour; the promise will satisfy thee, which assures thee, that if it be duly qualified, it cannot find the heart of God shut against it; *The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much*, James v. So assured have the saints been of this, that they, before any inkling from providence hath been heard (to bring the news of a mercy coming), have taken up joy upon the credit of the naked promise, and feasted themselves with the hopes of what they expected, but had not yet received, at the cost and charge of God's faithfulness with which the promise is sealed; *In God will I praise his word*, Psalm lvi. 4. Mark the phrase: he had not as yet the desired mercy, only a word of promise that it should come; now, considering the power and truth of God the promiser, he is as merry as if he were put in possession of it, and pays his praises before God performs the promise.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The second thing which satan gathers from God's deportment towards the Christian, thereby to bring

the hearing of his prayer into question in his anxious thoughts, is some anger, which seems to sit upon his brow against the Christian.

It cannot be denied, but sometimes a dear saint of God may go away from duty with an aching heart, by reason of the sad impressions of an angry God left upon his spirit. And when thus it fares with the Christian, satan's time is come (he thinks) to lead him into this temptation, by persuading him he may read what entertainment his prayer had at God's hands in the language of his countenance, and his carriage towards him. If God (saith he) had heard thy prayer, would he handle thee thus? No, sure, he would rather have taken thee up in his arms, and kissed thee with the kisses of his mouth, than thus trample thee under his feet. Thou shouldst have had darts of love shot from his pitiful eye, to intimate the purposes of his grace, and not arrows headed with his wrath, to stick in thy soul, and thus drink up thy very spirits. Can these be the wounds of a friend? This the deportment of one that means thee well? This was the temptation which ruffled Job's thoughts and imbittered his spirit, chap. ix. 17. He could not believe God answered his prayer, *because he broke him with his tempest*. As if God's mercy came always in the still voice, and never in the whirlwind.

Now in this case take this double word of counsel.

First, Enquire whether this tempest comes to find any Jonah in thy ship, whether it takes thee sinning, or soaking in any past sin unrepented; or whether thy conscience, diligently listened to, doth witness that thou art sincere in thy course, though compassed with many failings: if it overtakes thee in any run-away voyage with Jonah, or rambling course with the prodigal from thy father's house, then indeed thou hast reason to question, yea, it is beyond all question, that an acceptable prayer in this posture cannot drop from thy lips. What! run from God, and then send to him thy prayers! This is to desire mercy to spend upon thy lust: But if, upon thy faithful search, thou findest this storm overtakes thee in the way of duty and exercise of thy sincerity, like the tempest that met the disciples at sea, when at Christ's command they launched forth, then be not discouraged; for it is ordinary with God, to put on the disguise of an angry countenance; and to use rough language, when his heart is resolved upon ways of mercy, and meditates love to his people. Jacob, you know, wrestled hard, and long, before victory inclined to his side. And the woman of Canaan was kicked away like a dog, with harsh language, who at last was owned of Christ for a dear child, and sent away to her heart's content.

Sincerity needs fear no ill from God. This very consideration kept Job's head at another time above water, Job xvi. 12. There we

we find God taking him by the neck, shaking him as it were to pieces, and setting him up for his mark: but, v. 17. this upheld his troubled spirit, that all this befel him walking in the way of obedience; *Not for any injustice in my hands, also my prayer is pure:* wherefore he rears up his confidence, v. 19, 20. *Behold my witness is in heaven, and my record on high. My friends scorn me, but my eye poureth out tears unto God.* The holy man was not for all this scared from the throne of grace, but still looked on God, though with tears in his eyes, expecting good news at last, after so much bad. And we have warrant to do the same, 1 John iii. 21. *If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* And this brings me to the second word of counsel I have to give thee.

Secondly, Enquire whether under these frowns from God, there be yet a spirit of prayer working in thee. Haply thou canst not deny but that thy heart is rather stirred up from these to lament after the Lord with more restless sighs and groans, to pray with more feeling and fervency, than driven away from duty: This spirit of prayer upheld in thee, may assure thee of these two things.

First, That the cloud of anger which seems to sit on God's brow, is not in his heart.

It is but a thin vail, through which thy faith might see the working of his bowels towards thee. The presence of the spirit of God at work thus in a soul, cannot stand with his real anger. If his wrath were up, this in thee would be down. Thou shouldst have him soon calling back this his ambassador of peace, at least suspend and withdraw his assistance.

When that sad breach was made between God and David, in the matter of Uriah, David's harp was presently out of tune, his right hand had forgot its cunning, and the spirit of prayer received a sad damp in his heart. Where is the psalm to be found that was penned by David in that *interregnum* (as I may so say) of his grace? I do not say he did never pray all the time he lay soaking in that sin; but those prayers were not fit to be joined with the holy breathings of that spirit which acted him before his fall, and after his recovery: and therefore, good man, when by repentance he came to himself, like one recovering out of a dangerous sickness (which had for a time taken away his senses) he begins to feel himself weak, and how much the spirit of grace was by sin enfeebled in him, which makes him so vehemently beg, that God would *renew a right spirit in him, and not take his holy spirit from him*, Psalm li.

The spirit is so choice and peculiar a mercy, that if thou canst find lively actings of his grace in thee (and where are they more sensibly felt than in prayer helping the soul to sighs and groans which

which cannot be uttered?) that thou canst not in reason think God is not friends with thee, though it were at present as dark as midnight with thy soul.

Secondly, It may assure thee that his ear is open to thy cry, when his face is hid from thine eye.

For consider but who this spirit is it that thus helps thee in prayer, and furnisheth thee with all thy spiritual ammunition with which thou so plyest, and batterest the throne of grace. Is he not one that knows the mind of God? and that would not have a hand in that petition which should not be welcome to heaven? Having therefore this assistance from the spirit, doubt not thy acceptance from the father. In a word, the spirit that helps thee to thy groans and sighs in prayer, is no other than that God thou prayest to, and will God deny himself? This I conceive part, if not the principal part of that scripture's meaning, Isa. xlv. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain:* That is, whenever I stir up a soul to pray, and impower him with my spirit to perform it feelingly, fervently, and after a holy manner, it is always to purpose. God never said thus to any, *Seek ye me in vain.*

SECT. III.—Thirdly, The third thing from which satan takes his advantage to breed scruples in the christian's mind concerning the acceptance of his prayer, is the denial of the mercy in kind which is prayed for.

We are prone enough to have such thoughts ourselves, and satan will not be wanting to feed any bad humour that is stirring in us; or if our hearts seem pacified with this dealing of God, he hath his ways and wiles to conjure up this evil spirit of discontent and unbelief. On this errand he sent Job's wife, to make him think and speak evil of God; *Dost thou still retain thy integrity?* As if she had said, What, art thou at thy old work? still praying and praising God? Dost thou not see how much he regards thee, or thy serving of him? what hast thou by all thy devotion? is not thy estate gone? thy children slain and burried in one grave? and thyself left a poor loathsome cripple? thy life serving for nothing but to make thee feel thy present misery, and feed on thy past crosses?

Indeed it requires a good insight into the nature of the promises, and the divers ways God takes to fulfil them, to enable us to spell an answer out of a denial of the thing we pray for; yet such a *good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, Psa. cxi. 10. They can clear God, and justify his faithfulness in all his dealings, though when he comes to answer their prayers, he chooseth not to enter in at that door which they set open in their own thoughts and hopes for him, nor treads in the very steps of their express desires. The whole psalm contains a testimony

testimony given to the faithfulness of God in his providential works, at which, though a carnal cursory eye (from the mysteries hid therein) is scandalized, and takes offence, yet the gracious soul, by his more curious observance of, and enquiry into them, finds a sweet harmony between them and the promise, and therefore he concludes, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments. His praise endureth for ever.* They having a key to God's character, can read the hand of his providence, and so are able to praise him (knowing him faithful) when others are ready to curse him.

But to help thee out, or keep thee from falling into this temptation, thou art in the first place to consider, what mercy it is that God denies thee: is it not of that sort of blessings which are not necessary unto thy happiness as a saint? such all temporal mercies are. The kingdom of God consists not in meat and drink; thou wilt find an absolute denial for no other; he hath bid us take no denial for his love and favour, grace and glory, *Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face evermore*, Psal. cv. 4. that is, be not put off for these, but live and die at God's door till he brings this alms to thee. Well, we will take this for granted. 'Tis a temporal mercy thou art denied. Now when thou art tempted to question the love of God, or acceptance of thy prayer, let me desire thee to weigh this threefold consideration.

First, Consider how ill God may take this at thy hand, and that in a double respect.

First, That thou dost suspect his love upon so slight and trivial a matter, as the temporal enjoyments of this life are, which he thinks have not worth enough to be put into the promise any otherwise than they are subservient to the spiritual and eternal blessings of the covenant; *Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and these things shall be added unto you*, Matth. vi. That is, as you need them. He casts them into the other (more grand blessings) as a tradesman would do thread and paper, or a skein of silk unto a parcel of rich commodities that a customer buys of him.

Suppose a child should ask his father for money to buy some toy or trifle that pleaseth his green head, but the father denies him the thing; now if the child should go and make proclamation in the open street to the disgrace of his father, that his father did neither love nor regard him, though he wants neither food nor raiment, would this be well taken at the child's hand! This thou dost, Christian, in this case, though thou thinkest not so much; and hath not thy heavenly father more reason to question thy love, for taking away his good name, than thou to suspect his for his denial?

But again, he may take it ill that thou hast aspersed his wisdom.

dom. Is there no way but this for the wise God to shew his love, and answer thy prayer? cannot he deny health, and give patience? take away thy estate, and turn it into contentment? teaching thee to be abased, and to bless God thou art made low! He that will make thee so happy in heaven, where few of this world's enjoyments shall be seen, cannot he make thy life comfortable on earth without some of them?

Secondly, Consider how thou prayedst when thou did meet with this denial.

Didst thou pray peremptorily, and absolutely, or conditionally, with submission to the will of God? if peremptorily, thou wert beside the rule, and art the cause why thy prayer came back without it errand. God will not hear or bear commanding prayers; he that must have a temporal mercy, if he gets it, he may have a spiritual curse, but is sure to have a temporal cross: So Dalilah proved to Samson, who would not take his parents counsel, but must have her whatever comes of it, *Get her me, for she pleaseth me well*, Judges xiv. 4. But he paid dearly for his choice.

May be such an enjoyment pleaseth thee well, thy carnal heart is in love with it, and that sets thee a praying inordinately for it. Alas, poor creature, if thou hadst it, what wouldst thou to do with it? thou wouldst fondly lay thy head in its lap, and let it rock thy grace asleep, and then betray thee into the hand of some sin and judgment! but if thou sayest that thou prayest with a submissive spirit, on condition it liked God as well as thyself; if so, why then dost thou now recant thy prayer, seeing God hath declared his will, that it is not good for thee to have thy desire? wilt thou not be determined by him, to whom thou didst refer thyself? Hast thou not reason to think that God takes the best way for thee? There is never a prayer put up, but God doth, as it were, weigh and ponder it, and then his love sets his wisdom on work to make such a return, as may be most for his own glory, and his child's good. Now it being the product of such infinite wisdom and love, thou oughtest to acquiesce in it, yea to praise God for it: Thus did David in a great straight, *O my God, I cry in the day-time, and thou hearest not*, Psal. xxii. Well, what hears God from him, now he hears nothing from God, as to the deliverance prayed for? no murmuring nor caviling at God's proceedings; nay, he hears the quite contrary: for he justifies and praises God, ver. 3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel!*

Thirdly, Observe whether thou canst not gather something from the manner of God's denying the thing prayed for, which may sweeten it to thee.

Haply thou shalt find he denies thee, but it is with a smiling countenance, and ushers it in with some expressions of grace and favour,

favour, that may assure thee his denial proceeds not from displeasure. As you would do with a dear friend, who, may be, comes to borrow a sum of money of you, lend it you dare not, because you see plainly it is not for his good; but in giving him the denial, lest he should misinterpret it, as proceeding from want of love and respect, you therefore preface it in with some kind language of your hearty affection to him, as that you love him, and therefore deny him, and shall be ready to do for him more than that comes to. Thus God sometimes wraps up his denials in such sweet sugared intimations of his love, as prevents all jealousies from arising in the hearts of his people.

When David was denied to build a temple to God, as was in his heart to do, God gave him a large testimony of his affection, how highly he accepted his good will therein; though he should not build a temple for him, yet his desire was kindly taken, that God would build an house for him that should last for ever.—Thus sometimes a faithful minister prays earnestly that God would bless his labours to the converting of his people, and is denied; yet intimations of God's love to his person are dropped, with a promise, that, however, his reward is with the Lord; so that his prayer (though denied as to them) is returned with peace into his own bosom. Another prays passionately, Oh that he might see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, and that truth and peace might flourish in his days; this, may be, is not granted, because his desire antedates the period, which God hath fixed in his purpose for the fulfilling of his promise to his church; but he withal manifests his love to him, and expresseth how highly he resents his love to the church.

Thus God did by Daniel, to whom an angel was sent, to let him know what kind entertainment his prayer had, and that he was a man greatly beloved of God, Dan. ix. 11. So in temporal mercies, haply thou art pleading with God for deliverance out of this trouble, and that affliction; and it is denied thee, but a message with the denial that recompenseth it double: May be, some sweet elapses of his love he drops into thy bosom, or assurance of seasonable succours, that shall be sent in to enable thee to charge through them with faith and victory. So God dealt with Paul; *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

I hope now thou wilt not say thy prayer is lost. When Saul sought his father's asses, was he not shrewdly hurt to find a kingdom instead of them? The holy women that went to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus with their spices, did not lose their labour, though they found him risen; were they, thinkest thou, sorry for that? What are all the enjoyments of the world to the spiritual mercies and comfort of the promises which thou findest

findest in thy attendance on God? Not so much as the dead body to our risen Saviour; thou findest not some dead creature-comfort, but thou meetest with embraces from a living God.

CHAP. XXVI.

How to know whether a Mercy comes to us by common Providence, or as a gracious Answer to Prayer, resolved.

THE fourth and last thing that satan abuseth the Christian with, to make him doubtful of the acceptance of his prayer, and also question, when a mercy is given in after prayer, whether it comes as a gracious answer to it or no, is this, that the wicked themselves have many, and those the same temporal mercies issued out unto them by the hand of common providence without prayer, which he receives that performs this duty.

Now, saith satan, how knowest thou that thy mercies come to thee as an answer of thy prayer, and not at the door of common providence with them?

For the extricating thee out of this snare, thou must know, that we are not to expect extraordinary ways to determine this, but must satisfy ourselves with what light the word of God affords, which is able to resolve, not only this, but all our cases of conscience. It is true, that God doth sometimes cast in some such circumstances, as bring an evidence with them, that the mercy flies to us on the wings of prayer; as, when upon Abraham's servant's praying at the well for God's gracious conduct and help to dispatch his master's business prosperously, that Rebecca should presently come forth, and by her kind carriage and invitation, so fitly answer the mould of his prayer, even as the lock doth the key made for it. Here heaven declared to his very sense, that his prayer found the right way to heaven. When upon prayer the mercy is thus cast in strangely and suddenly without the concurrence of second causes, yea, when they all lie under a visible sentence of death, and the thing is put beyond the activity of their sphere to work; here there is no rival to stand in competition with prayer. Thus when the apostles healed the sick upon a short prayer darted up to heaven, not so much as a doctor's advice asked in the cure.

When Peter knocked at the door where the church was praying for him, what but prayer bound his keeper's senses so fast in the chains of sleep, and made those with which Peter was bound, to fall off without any kind hand to help, but heaven's? What made

made the iron gate so officious to open to him that had no key in his hand to unlock it? Surely we must confess, prayer opened heaven's door, and heaven, at the church's prayer, open the prison door. Yet, it is as true, that more commonly mercies that are won by prayer, come not with this pomp and observation; but, as converting grace often steals into the hearts of some with less terror and noise of humiliation, than it doth into others: So, truly, do answers to prayer (and that more commonly) come with more silence, and in the ordinary road, by the concurring help of second causes. As the Christian praying for the temporal provisions of this life, God answers his prayer by blessing his diligence in his calling. The sick Christian praying, hath his food and physic thereby sanctified, and so recovers.

Now, though God hath left himself at liberty either to send his mercies by secondary hands, or when he pleaseth to be the messenger himself, and bring them in an extraordinary way with his immediate hand; yet hath he not left us at liberty to leave the ordinary road, and neglect the means, under a pretence of expecting extraordinary ways to have our desires.

Now as to this ordinary way of giving in mercies in answer to prayer, these two things are to be enquired for:

First, Enquire whether thou (who didst put up the prayer) beest in a covenant-state, when God gives a mercy in answer to prayer.

He is said to *remember his covenant*, Psal. cv. 31. compared with ver. 8. and to *be mindful of his covenant*, Psal. cxi. 5. His eye is first on the person, taking notice who he is, whether his child or no, and then his ear is open to his cry, Psal. xxxiv. 15. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; and his ears are open to their cry. Who art thou, my son?* said Isaac to Jacob, before he gave him the blessing. If God sees that thou art not his child (and his eyes are not dim like old Isaac's, that he can be deceived), thy prayer is not accepted.

Indeed neither canst thou in that state pray, in a gospel sense, nor God graciously bid thy prayer welcome: For the spirit of prayer is a covenant-grace, and interest in the mediation of Christ, a covenant privilege; without both which, no prayer is accepted. God hears not any that have not his spirit to pray in them, and his Son to pray for them; and none have these, but such as are in a covenant-state.

Secondly, Enquire what thy frame of heart was in the duty of prayer, and also after its performance.

Thy not being in a covenant-state, will prove thy prayer was not heard, and consequently, that the mercy received came not as a gracious answer to it: But thy being in a covenant-state, is an insufficient ground for thee to conclude, that this particular prayer

thou

that now thou puttest up is accepted; because there may intervene something to hinder the present benefit of this privilege which is annexed to thy covenant-state: For, though thy state be good, yet thy present frame and behaviour may be naught.—Thou mayest, though a child of God, be under fresh guilt and defilement as yet unrepented of. Now, in this case, God cannot shut his door upon his own child. Thou hast indeed *jus in re*, but not *aptitudinem ad rem*. As a saint, thou hast a right to all the promises of the covenant, and to this, of having God's ear open to thy prayers among the rest; but as thou art a saint under guilt, or the defilement of any sin that thou hast not yet repented of, thou art not fit to enjoy what thou hast a right to as a saint. God doth not disinherit thee indeed, but he sequesters the promise from thee, and the rents of it shall not be paid to thee, till thou renewest thy repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus for the pardon of it. Thy God will chuse a fitter time than this is to signify his love to thee. The leper, under the law, was to stand off, while purified; and so will thy God turn his back on thy prayer, till thou beest cleansed of thy sin.

Again, Suppose thou art a saint, and hast not thus defiled thyself with any gross sin, yet thy graces might not be exercised in the duty of prayer; haply thou didst pray, but no faith or fervency were exerted in it. There may be grace in the heart, but none in the duty; and such a prayer shall not speed: The promise is to the saint acting his faith and fervency in prayer, *The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much*, James v. *Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*, Jer. xxix. 12.

Lastly, Though thou wert stirred up in prayer, yet may be thy heart was not raised up to rely on God after prayer for an answer. Then we pray in faith, when we so take hold of God by faith in prayer, as to wait and stay ourselves upon God for a return of mercy from him.

Now, by putting all these together, thou mayest come to the resolution of the question in hand, if thou beest in a covenant-state, and liest not in any known sin unrepented of; if thou prayest fervently, and actest faith on God, so as to stay thy soul upon God for an answer, though accompanied with many weaknesses and staggerings, truly thou mayest, without presumption, conclude the mercy which finds thee in this orderly manner waiting upon God, comes as a gracious answer to thy prayer. We do not fear to break open a letter, when we find our name in the superscription directing it to us. Search the promises, and thou shalt find them directed by name to thee who prayest thus.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

The First Importance of Praying always, *shewn to amount to as much as Praying in every thing; and why all our Affairs and Actions are to be encircled within the Duty of Prayer.*

HAVING dispatched the duty of prayer in general, we now come to give an account of the several branches in the exhortation; which together make up an excellent directory to the Christian for his better performing of this duty.

Indeed the apostle here not only teacheth the Christian how to pray, but the minister also how to preach, in that he doth not nakedly tell them what is their duty, and so leave them to their own skill in the management of it, but that he may facilitate the duty unto them, he annexeth such directions, and so rules their copy for them, that they shall not easily miscarry in the performance thereof. That preacher, who presseth a duty, though with never so much zeal, but doth not chalk out the way how it is to be done, is like one that brings a man to a door that is locked, and bids him go into the house, but gives him no key to open it: Or that sends a company to sea, but lends them no chart by which they should steer their course.

But to come to the directions; they are six.

We shall begin with the first.

First, The time for this duty [*always*], and this hath a threefold importance:

First, *To pray always*, is as much as if he had said, *Pray in every thing*, according to that of the same apostle in another epistle, *In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

Prayer is a catholic duty, with which, like a girdle, we are to compass in all our affairs; it is to be as bread and salt on our table; whatever else we have to our meal, these are not forgot to be set on; whatever we do, or would have, prayer is necessary, be it small or great; not as the heathen, who prayed for some things to their gods, and not for other; if poor, they prayed for riches; if sick, for health: but as for the good things of the mind, such as patience, contentation, and other virtues, they thought they could carve well enough in these for themselves, without troubling their gods to help them. The Poet it seems was of this mind:

Hoc satis est orare Jovem qui donat & aufert;
Det vitam, det opes, animum me æquum ipse parabo.

O how proud is ignorance! let God give the less, and man will do the greater.

But their folly is not so much to be wondered at, as the irreligion of many among ourselves, who profess to know the true God, and have the light of his word to direct them what worship to give him. Some are so brutish in their knowledge, that they hardly pray to God for any thing, others not for every thing.—May be they look upon pardon of sin, and salvation of their souls, (as fruit on the top branches of a tree) out of the reach of their own arm, and therefore now and then put some slighty prayers to God for them. But as for temporals, which seem to hang lower, they think they can pluck them by their own industry, without setting up the ladder of prayer to come at them. They that should see some, how busy they are in laying their plots, and how seldom in prayer, could not but think they expected their safety from their own policy, and not God's providence: or should observe, how hard they work in their shop, and how seldom and lazy they are at prayer for God's blessing on their labour, in their closet; they must conclude these men promise themselves their estates more from their own labour, than the divine bounty.

In a word, it is some great occasion that must bring many upon their knees before God in prayer: may be, when they have an extraordinary enterprize in hand, wherein they look for strong opposition or great difficulty; in such a case, God shall have them knocking at his door (for now they are at their wits end, and know not how to turn them) but the more ordinary and common actions of their lives, they think they can master at their pleasures, and so pass by God's door without bespeaking his presence or assistance; thus one runs into his shop, and another into the field, and takes no notice that God is concerned in their employments; if to take a long journey by sea or land, where imminent dangers and hazards present themselves unto their thoughts, then God hath their company; but if to stay at home, or walk to and fro in their ordinary employments, they bespeak not the providential wing of God to overshadow them.

This is not to pray always; if thou wilt therefore be a christian, do not thus part stakes with God, committing the greater transactions of thy life to him, and trust thyself with the less: but *acknowledge God in all thy ways, and lean not to thine own understanding in any;* by this, thou shalt give him the glory of his universal providence, with which he encircles all his creatures, and all their actions: as nothing is too great to be above his power, so nothing too little to be beneath his care; he is the God of the valleys, as well as of the mountains. The sparrow on the hedge, and the hair on our head, are cared for by him; and this is no more derogatory to his glorious majesty, than it was to make them at first. Nay, thou shalt by this not only give God his glory, but secure thyself; for there is no passage in thy whole life so minute

nute and inconsiderable, which (if God should withdraw his care and providence) might not be an occasion of a sin or danger to thee; and that which exposeth thee to these, calls upon thee to engage God for thy defence.

First, The least passage in thy life may prove an occasion of sin to thee; at what a little wicket many times a great sin enters, we daily see.

David's eye did but casually light on Bathsheba, and the good man's foot was presently in the devil's trap; hast thou not then need to pray, that God would set a guard about thy senses whereever thou goest? and to cry with him, *Keep back mine eyes from beholding vanity?* Dinah went but to give her neighbours, *the daughters of the land,* a visit (which was but an ordinary civility) and we may imagine, that she little thought, when she went out, of playing the strumpet before she came home; yet alas, we read how she was defloured: what need then hast thou, before thou goest forth, to charge God with the keeping of thee, that so thou mayest be in his fear from morning till night?

Secondly, No passage of thy life so small, wherein thou mayest not fall into some great danger.

How many have been choaked with their food at their own table! received their deadly wound by a beam from their own house? knowest thou what will be the end of any action when thou beginnest it? Joseph was sent by his father to see his brethren in the field, and neither of them thought of a longer journey; yet this proved the sad occasion of his captivity in a strange land. Job's servants were destroyed with lightening from heaven, when they were abroad about their master's business. Where canst thou be safe, if heaven's eye be not on thee? A slip of thy foot when thou walkest, or a trip of thy horse as thou ridest, may break thy bones, yea thy neck. O! what need then of a God to make thy path plain before thee! Is it he that *preserves man and beast;* and canst thou have faith to expect his protection, when thou hast not a heart to bespeak it in thy humble prayers at his hand? What reason hath God to take care for thy safety, who carest no more for his honour?

CHAP. XXVIII.

The second Importance of Praying always, to pray in all Conditions, Prosperity, and Adversity; and why this Duty is so to be performed.

SECONDLY, To pray always, may import as much, as to pray in all conditions; that is, in prosperity, as well as in adversity: so Calvin takes it, *Omni tempore perinde valet, atque tam prosperis quam adversis.*

Indeed when God doth afflict, he puts an especial season for prayer into our hands; but when he enlargeth our state, he doth not discharge us of the duty, as if we might then lay it aside (as the traveller doth his cloak when the weather is warm). Prayer is not a winter garment: It is then to be worn indeed, but not to be left off in the summer of prosperity; if you would find some at prayer, you must stay till it thunders and lightens; not go to them except it be in a storm or tempest. These are like some birds that are never heard to cry or make a noise, but in or against foul weather.

This is not to pray always; not to serve God, but to serve ourselves of God; to visit God, not as a friend for love of his company, but as a mere beggar for relief of our present necessity; using prayer as that Pope is said to have used preaching, for a net to compass in some mercy we want, and when the fish is got, then to throw away the duty. Well, Christian, take heed of this; thou hast arguments enough to keep this duty always on its wheels, let thy condition be what it will.

First, Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest speed when thou prayest in adversity; own God now, that he may acknowledge thee then.

Shall that friend be made welcome to us, that never gives us a visit, but when he comes to borrow? This is a right beggar's trick, but not a friend's part.

Secondly, Pray in prosperity to clear thyself, that thou didst not pray in hypocrisy when thou wert afflicted.

One prayer now, will be a better evidence for thy sincerity, than a whole bundle of duties performed in adversity: colours are better discerned and distinguished by day-light, than by the candle in the night. I am sure the truth and plainness of our hearts in duty, will be best discovered in prosperity. In affliction even gracious souls have scruples upon their spirits that they seek themselves; smart and pain, they fear, makes them cry till they remember that their acquaintance with God did not begin in their affliction, but that they took delight in his company before these srtaits drove them to him. Thirdly,

Thirdly, Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest not be ensnared by thy prosperity.

Ephraim and Manasses were brethren; and so are plenty and forgetfulness (the signification of their name). Prosperity is no friend to the memory, therefore we are cautioned so much to beware when we are full, lest then we forget God. *Magnus vir est, cui præsens fælicitas si arrisit non irrisit. Bern.* He is a holy man indeed, whose present prosperity doth not mock and abuse him, when it smiles most pleasingly on him. O how hard is it to be pleased with it, and not be ensnared by it! *Strong drink*, saith Solomon, *is a mocker;* it soon puts him, that is too bold with it, to shame; prosperity doth the same. A little of it makes us drunk, and then we know not what we do: this hath proved often an hour of temptation to the best of men.

You shall find in scripture, the saints have got their saddest falls on the evenest ground. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, no sooner almost was he come safe to shore, but himself is drowned in wine. David's heart was fixed in the wilderness, but his wanton eye rolled and wandered when upon the terrace of his palace. Health, honour, riches, and pleasures, with the rest of this world's enjoyments, they are like luscious wine, we cannot drink little of them, they are so sweet to our carnal palate, and we cannot bear much of them, because they are strong and heady, fuming up in pride and carnal confidence. Now prayer is an excellent preservative against the evil of this state.

First, As it spiritualizes our joy into thankfulness; it is carnal joy that is dreggy, and therefore soon putrifies. Now as prayer in affliction refines the christian's sorrow by breathing it forth in holy groans to God, whereby he is kept from sinful complaints of God, and murmurings against him: thus here the christian, by giving a spiritual vent to his joy in thanksgiving and praises of his God, he is preserved from the degeneracy of carnal joy, that betrays the soul to many foul sins, if itself be not one: for which purpose it is, that the Apostle James cuts out this twofold channel for this double affection to run in: *Is any afflicted? let him pray: Is any merry? let him sing psalms*, James 5. As if he should say, Let the afflicted soul pray, that he may not murmur: Let the joyous saint sing psalms, that his joy turn not sensual. A carnal heart can easily be merry and jocund when he prospers: the saint alone is praiseful. The psalmist, speaking of the mariners delivered from storms at sea, (which threatened their wreck) saith, *Then they are glad, because they be quiet*, Psal. cvii. 30. But this they may be and yet not thankful: wherefore he adds his holy option, *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!*

Secondly, By prayer the soul is led into the acquaintance of higher delights than are to be found in all his temporal enjoyments, and thereby is taken off from an inordinate valuation of them, because he knows where better are to be had. The true reason why men are puffed up with too high an opinion of worldly felicities, is their ignorance of spiritual.

Thirdly, Prayer is God's ordinance to sanctify our creature-comforts. *Every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer*, 1 Tim. iv. 5. Now this obtained, the Christian may safely drink of these streams; the unicorn hath now put in his horn to heal them; satan shall not have such power to corrupt him in the use of them, as another that bespeaks not God's blessing on them.—There is a vanity and flatulency in every creature, which, if not corrected by prayer, breeds indigested humours in him that feeds on it.

Fourthly, In thy prosperity pray, to shew thy dependence on God for what thou enjoyest.

Thou holdest all thy mercies *in capite;* he that gave thee thy life, holds thy soul in life. *Thou hidest thy face*, saith David, *and I was troubled.* Truly it is time for God to withdraw his hand, when thou goest about to cut off his title. That enjoyment comes but as a guest, which is not entertained by prayer. Solomon tells us of wings that our temporal mercies have: now if any thing can clip these, and keep them from flying away, it is prayer. God would often have destroyed Israel, but Moses stood in the gap; their mercies were oft upon the wing, but that holy man's prayers stayed their flight. God's heart would not serve him to come over the back of his prayer, and put that to shame; no, they shall live, but let them say Moses's prayer begged their life.

Now, if the prayer of a holy person could prevail for others, and obtain a new lease for their lives, that were (many of them) none of the best; surely then the prayer of a saint may have great power with God for his own. Long life is promised to him that honours his earthly father; prayer gives our heavenly Father the greatest honour. If, therefore, thou wouldst have thy life, or the life of any mercy prolonged, forget not to pay him this tribute. Yea, would you transmit what God hath blessed you with to your posterity? the best way thou canst take, is to lock thy estate up in God's hand by prayer; whatever will thou makest, God is sure to be thy executor. Man may propose and purpose, but God disposeth. Engage him, and the care is taken for thy posterity.

Fifthly, Pray now, that thou mayest out-live the loss of thy prosperity.

When prayer cannot prevail to keep a temporal mercy alive with

with thee, yet it will have a powerful influence to keep thy heart alive when that dies. Oh it is sad, when a man's estate and comfort are buried in the same grave together! None will bear the loss of an enjoyment so patiently, as he that was exercised in prayer while he had it. When Job was in his flourishing estate, his children alive, and all his other enjoyments, then he was a great trader with God in this duty; *He sanctified his children every day.* He did not bless himself in them, but sought the blessing of God for them; and see how comfortably he bears all, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* The more David prayed for his child while alive, the fewer tears he shed for it when it was dead.

CHAP. XXIX.

The Third Importance of Praying always, to be as much as Praying daily; and why we are to Pray daily.

THIRDLY, To pray always, is to pray daily.

When the Christian keeps a constant daily exercise of this duty, prayer is not a holy-day, but every-day work: *Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thee for ever and ever,* Psal. cv. 2. This was typified by the daily sacrifice, called therefore *the continual burnt-offering*, Exod. xxix. 38. whereby was signified our daily need of seeking mercy at God's hands through Christ. When our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he bade them not ask bread for a week, no, not for a morrow, but for the present day, *Give us this day our daily bread:* plainly signifying our duty to seek our bread every day of God; which surely was also the end why God gave the manna in such a portion, as should not stuff their cup-boards, and furnish them with a store for a month or week, but be a just *domensum*, and sufficient allowance for a day, that so they might be kept in a daily dependence on God, and look up to him daily, who carried the key of their pantry for them: and have not we the same necessities upon us with them? our bodies are as weak as theirs, and cannot be preserved without daily repast. Do we not depend on him for the bread of the day, and the rest of the night? And he hath too good an opinion of his soul's constitution, who thinks it can live or thrive with yesterday's meal, without renewing his communion with God to-day. The mother would think the sucking child not well, if it should forsake the breast a whole day: so mayest thou

conclude thy soul is not right, that can pass a day without craving any spiritual repast in prayer.

If thy wants be not sufficient to keep the chariot of this duty on its wheels, yet the sins which thou daily renewest would drive thee every day to confess and beg pardon for them. We are under a law, *not to let the sun go down upon our wrath against our brother:* and dare we, who every day deserve God's wrath, let the sun go down, before that controversy is taken up between God and us! In a word, Every day hath its new mercies: *His compassions fail not; they are new every morning*, Lam. iii. 23. These new mercies contract a new debt, and God hath told us the way of payment, viz. a tribute of praise: without this, we cannot expect a sanctified use of them. He is branded by all for a profane person, that eats his meat, and gives not thanks: and it would be thought a ridiculous excuse, should he say, he gave thanks yesterday, and that should serve for this meal also. We have more mercies every day to bless God for, than what is set on our tables. We wear mercies, we breathe mercies, we walk upon mercies, our whole life is but a passage from one mercy, to be entertained by another. As one cloth is drawn, another is laid for a new feast to be set on. Now God doth every day anoint our head with fresh oil, and shall not we crown him with new praises?

I will not enter into a discourse, how often a Christian should in a day pray: at least it must be twice, i. e. morning and night. Prayer must be the key of the morning, and lock of the night.—We show not ourselves Christians, if we do not open our eyes with prayer when we rise, and shut them again with the same key when we lie down at night. This answers to the morning and evening sacrifice in the law; which yet was so commanded, as to leave room for those other free-will offerings which their zeal might prompt them to; pray as often as you please besides, so that your devotions justle not with the necessary duties of your particular calling; the oftener, the more welcome. We read of David's *seven times a-day;* but be sure thou dost not retrench and cut God short of thy stated hours. *It is a good thing* (saith the Psalmist) *to give thanks unto the Lord, to shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night*, Psalm xcii. 1, 2. *God is Alpha and Omega.* It is fit we should begin and end the day with his praise, who begins and ends it for us with his mercy

Well, Christian, thou seest thy duty plainly laid before thee. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. He that takes no care to set forth God's portion of time in the morning, not only robs God of his

his due, but is a thief to himself all the day after, by losing a blessing which a faithful prayer might bring from heaven on his undertakings. And he that closeth his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made: He is like a foolish captain in a garrison, who betakes himself to his rest, before he hath set the watch for the city's safe-guard. God is his people's keeper: but can he expect to be kept by him, that chargeth not the divine providence with his keeping? The angels, at his command, pitch their tents about his saints' dwellings. But as the drum calls the watch together, so God looks that, by humble prayer, we should beg of him their ministry and attendance about us.

I shall shut up this discourse with one caution to be observed in your daily exercise of this duty.

Caution. Beware that thy constant daily performance of this duty do not degenerate into a lifeless formality.

What we do commonly, we are prone to be but ordinary and slightly in the doing. He is a rare Christian, that keeps his course in prayer, and yet grows not customary to pray of mere course. The power of religion cannot be preserved, without an outward form and order observed in its exercises, and yet very hard it is, not to grow formal in those duties which we are daily conversant with. Many that are very neat and nice when their holy-day suit is on their back, are yet too slovenly in wearing their every-day apparel. Thus at a fast, or on a Sabbath, our hearts are haply stirred up to some solemnity and spirituality becoming the duty of prayer, as being awed with the sacredness of the time, and extraordinary weight of the work.

But, alas, in our every-day duties, we are too slightly and slovenly. Now set thyself, Christian, with all thy might, to keep up the life and vigour of thy spirit in thy daily approaches to God. Be as careful to set an edge on thy graces before thy prayer, as on thy stomach before thy meal. Labour to come as hungry to this duty, as to eat thy dinner and supper. Now, no expedient for this, like a holy watch set about thy heart in the whole course of thy life. He that watcheth his heart all day, is most likely to find it at hand, and in tune for prayer at night; whereas loose walking breeds lazy praying. Be often in the day putting thyself in mind what work waits for thee at night. Thou art to draw near unto thy God; and this will make thee afraid of doing any thing in the day, that will indispose thee, or make thee fear a chide from thy God when thou appearest before him.

That of the apostle is observable, 1 Pet. i. 17. *If he call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* As if he had said, do you mean to pray? Then look to the

the whole course of your walking, that it be in the fear of God, or else you will have little heart to go about that work, and as little hope that he will bid you welcome; for he judgeth of persons that pray, not only by their prayers, but by their works and walking.

CHAP. XXX.

Of Ejaculatory Prayer, its Nature, excellent Use, and End.

SECONDLY, The second branch in the apostle's directory for prayer follows, which hath respect to the kinds of prayer that are to be taken into the Christian's exercise; as for the season, he must pray always, so for the kinds of prayer, with all prayer and supplication; now there is a double *All* to be observed.

First, *All manner of prayer*. Secondly, *All matter* of prayer.

I shall begin with the *first*, *Modus orandi*, and that falls under several divisions and distinctions.

First, Prayer is *sudden and ejaculatory*, or *composed and fixed*.

Secondly, That which is composed, is either solitary, or social, performed jointly with others.

Thirdly, Social and joint prayer, is either *private* in the family, or *public* in the *church*.

Fourthly, Solitary and social, private and public prayer, are either ordinary, or extraordinary.

First, *Ejaculatory*, which is nothing else but the lifting up of the soul to God upon a sudden emergent occasion, with some short (but lively expression) of our desires to him; sometimes it is vocal, sometimes only groaned forth from the secret workings of a gracious heart.

These darts may be shot to heaven, without using the tongue's bow: Such a kind of prayer that of Moses was, which rang so loud in God's ear, that he asked Moses, *Wherefore criest thou unto me?* Exod. xiv. 15. Whereas we read of never a word that he spake; it was no season for Moses then to retire and betake himself to the duty of prayer, in a composed and settled way, as at other times he was wont, for the enemy was at his back, and the people of Israel flocking about him, murmuring and charging him with the guilt of blood, in that he had enticed them out of Egypt to fall into such a trap, wherein they expected no other than to lose their lives, either in the sea, or by the *Egyptians.*

Hans. This, no doubt, made Moses presently dispatch his desires to heaven by the hand of some short ejaculation, the surest and quickest post in the world, which brought him back a speedy and happy return, as you may see, ver. 16.

Thus Nehemiah also, upon the occasion of the king's speech to him, interposeth a short prayer to God between the king's question, and his answer to it, Nehem. ii. 4. *Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said to the king*, &c. So soon was this holy man at heaven and back again (even in a trice), without any breach of manners, in making the king wait for his answer.

Sometimes you have the saints forming their desires into a few smart and passionate words, which fly with a holy force from their lips to heaven, as an arrow out of a bow. Thus old Jacob, when he was dispatching his sons back again to Egypt, and had with the greatest prudence provided for their journey (by furnishing them with double money, and a choice present in their hand to appease the governor of the land), that now he might engage heaven on their side, he breaks forth into this ejaculatory prayer. *God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your brother and Benjamin*, Gen. xliii. 14. And David, when intelligence came that Achitophel was of Absalom's counsel, let fly that dart to heaven, which came down upon his head with a vengeance, *O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Achitophel into foolishness!* 2 Sam. xv. 31.

This kind of praying David probably might mean, Psal. cxix. 164. when he saith, *Seven times a-day do I praise thee;* not as if he had seven set hours for this duty every day, as the Papists would have it to countenance their seven canonical hours; but rather a definite number is here put for an indefinite, and so amounts to no more than this: he did very often in a day praise God, his holy heart taking the hint of every providence, to carry him to heaven on this errand of prayer and praise.

Now to dispatch this kind of prayer, I shall only,

First, Shew why the Christian, beside his stated hours for prayer (wherein he holds more solemn commerce with God), should also visit God occasionally, and step into his presence, ever and anon (whatever he is about), with these ejaculatory breathings of his heart. For this is a kind of prayer that needs not interrupt the Christian, nor break any squares in his other employments.

Is he on a journey? he may go to heaven in these short sallies of his soul, and make no less speed in his way for them. Is he in the field at work? his plough needs not stand still for this; as the meadow is not the worse for what the bee sucks from its flowers; so neither doth a man's worldly occasions suffer any loss

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from that spiritual improvement, which a gracious soul thus makes of them.

SECT. I.—The first reason may be taken from God, who, to shew his great delight in his children's prayers, lets his door stand always wide open, that whenever we have but a heart, and will be so kind as to step in to visit him with a prayer, at what time of the day or night soever it be, we shall be welcome; nay, he doth not only give us a liberty, but lays it as a law upon us, to let him hear from us as often as possibly we can, and therefore commands us to pray continually, 1 Thess. v. And, *whatever we do, in word or deed, to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father by him.* What do these, and such like places signify? but that we should take every occasion that his spirit and providence bring to our hand, for the lifting our hearts up to him in prayer.

And can we suppose that a prayer, at our first setting forth in the morning, with never thinking of God any more till we come to our round for prayer at night again, will pass for a praying continually? When a father chargeth his son, that lives abroad, to let him as often as may be hear from him; though he doth not expect a long epistle from him by every messenger that comes that way, yet looks for some short remembrance of his duty by word of mouth, and it is accepted, till he has more leisure to write his full mind.

God bids pray continually; now he knows we cannot be always on our knees in the solemn performance of this duty; but therefore he expects to hear the oftener from us in these occasional remembrances of him, (hinted to us all along the day by emerging providences), which the holy spirit stands ready as our messenger to convey unto him.

SECT. II.—Secondly, From the excellent use of ejaculatory prayer in the Christian's whole course of life.

First, They are of excellent use to be set against those sudden injections of satan, which he will be darting into our minds.

It were strange, if the best saints should not find the devil busy with them in this kind; none so pure whose chastity of mind this foul spirit dares not to assault; and when his temptations have once coloured our imagination, it is hard wiping them off before they soak so deep as to leave some malignant tincture on our affections. Now when any such dart from hell is shot in at thy window, no such way to wind out of the temptation, as to shoot thy darts to heaven in some holy ejaculation. Our Saviour taught his disciples the use of this weapon. *Pray that you enter not into temptation.*

Now when thou canst not draw out the long sword of a solemn prayer, then go to the short dagger of ejaculatory prayer; and with

with this, if in the hand of faith, thou mayest stab thy enemy to the heart. He that at one short prayer of David could infatuate Achitophel, an oracle for policy, can befool the devil himself, and will at thy prayer of faith; *The Lord rebuke thee*, O satan, (saith Christ); it is time now for satan to be gone, when heaven takes the alarm; as when thieves are about a house to rob it, and they within beat a drum, or give a sudden shriek to call in help, presently they flee; and if God, for thy trial, should not come at first call to rid thee of these unwelcome guests, yet the very crying out (if affectionate and cordial) will clear thee from consenting to their villainy.

Secondly, They are a sovereign means to allay the Christian's affections to the world, one of the worst enemies he hath in the field against him; for it choaks the soul, thickens the Christian's spirit, and changes his very complexion.

Who but dying men smell of the earth, and carry its colour in their countenance? grace dieth apace, where the heart savours much of the earth. Now, prayer, what is it, but the lifting of the soul from earth to heaven? Were we oftener in a day sucking in, as it were, fresh air, and new influences of grace from God, our spirits could not be possibly so much poisoned with worldly affections.

When one was asked, whether he did not admire the goodly structure of a stately house? answered, no; for (saith he) I have been at Rome, where more magnificent fabrics are to be seen. Thus when satan presents the world's pleasures or treasures to the Christian, that he may inveigle his affections to doat on them, a gracious soul can say, I have been at heaven, there is not an hour in the day wherein I enjoy not better than these in communion with my God.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, They keep the Christian's heart in a holy disposition for the more solemn performance of this duty. Now consider here,

He that is so heavenly in his earthly employments, will be the less worldly in his heavenly. It was a sweet speech of a dying saint, that he was going to change his place, but not his company. A Christian that is frequent in these ejaculations when he goes to pray more solemnly, he goes not from the world to God, but from God to God; from a transient view of him to a more fixed; whereas another discontinues his acquaintance with God, after his morning visit, and comes not in his company, till called in by his customary performance. O! how hard a business will such a one find it to pray with a heavenly heart? What you fill the vessel with, you must expect to draw thence; if water be put in, we cannot, without a miracle, think to draw wine. What! art thou all day filling thy heart with earth, and God not in all thy thoughts;

thoughts; and dost thou look to draw heaven thence at night? If you would have fire for your evening sacrifice, expect not new from heaven to be dropped, but labour to keep what is already on thine altar from going out; which thou canst not better do, than by feeding it with this fuel.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, They are of excellent use to alleviate any great affliction that lies heavy upon the soul or body, while others sit disconsolate, grinding their souls, and wasting their spirits with their own anxious thoughts.

These are his wings with which he flieth above his troubles, and in an instant shoots his soul to heaven, out of the din and noise of his afflictions. How can he be long uncomfortable, who, when any thing begins to disquiet him, lets it not lie boaking and belching in his mind, as a thorn in the flesh, but presently gives vent to it, by some heavenly meditation, or heart-easing prayer to God? Those heavy tidings which came to Job, one upon the neck of another, it was not possible for him to have stood under their weight, had his thoughts been employed on no other subject than his affliction. But being able to lift up his heart to God, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord;* this one devout meditation, or ejaculation, gave him incomparable ease.

Indeed in afflictions that are sharp and violent, it is no time for long discourses; the poor creature cannot hold out in a continued duty of prayer, as at another time. When the fight grows hot, and the army comes to grapple hand to hand with their enemy, they have not leisure to charge their great artillery, then their short swords do them most service. Truly thus it is in this case; the poor creature may be finds his body weak, and his spirit oppressed with temptations which satan pours like so much shot upon him, that all he can well do, is to pray quick and short; now fetch a groan for the pain he feels, and then shoot a dart to heaven, to call God into his help. And blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of these arrows.

We see Christ, in his agony, chose to pray often, rather than long. *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: However, not my will, but thine be done.* This short ejaculation he sends to heaven thrice, with some little pause of time between prayer and prayer; *and was heard in that he feared*, Heb. v.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

A Reproof to those that use not this Kind of Prayer; or do it in a Prophane Manner; or that use this kind of Prayer, but neglect other.

SECT. I.—*Use* 1. FOR reproof of those that are wholly unacquainted with this kind of praying, not such a dart to be found in all their quiver.

Their heart is as a bow bent indeed, and their quiver full of arrows; but all are shot beside this mark; the world is their butt, at this they let fly all their thoughts. God is so great a stranger with them, that they hardly speak to, or think of him from morning to night, though they travel all day in his company: and is it not strange, that God, who is so near his creature, should be so far from his thoughts? Where canst thou be? Or what can thy eye light upon that may not bring God to thy remembrance, and give thee a fair occasion to lift up thy heart to him? He is present with thee in every place and company; thou canst use no creature, enjoy no mercy, feel no affliction, and put thy hand to no work, which will not prompt thee either to beg his counsel, seek his blessing, crave his protection, or give him praise for his gracious providence over thee.

The very beast thou ridest on, could it speak (as once Balaam's ass did), would reprove thy atheism, who goest plodding on thy way, and takest no notice of him that preserveth both man and beast. But God speaks once, yea, twice, and brutish men perceive it not. Well may Solomon say, *The heart of the wicked is little worth*, when *God is not in all his thoughts*. What can that heart be worth that is stuffed with that which is worth nought, at least which within a while will be so, for *in that moment* wherein those poor wretches die, *all their thoughts perish*, and come to nothing. Truly, though ye were so many kings and emperors, yet if the stock of your thoughts be spent all the day long upon earthly projects, (never flying so high, as to lead you into communion with God), you are but like those vermin, that are buried alive in some stinking dung-hill; the food your souls live upon, is low and base, and such must the temper of your souls also needs be.

Oh! how many are there in the world, whose backs are bravely clad in scarlet, while their souls embrace the dung-hill? Whose bellies are so high fed, and deliciously pampered, but their souls set at coarse fare? The body, which is the beggar, is mounted on horse-back, and the soul, which is the prince, walks on foot.

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preferred to no higher employment, than to hold his slave's stirrup, being made to bestow all its thoughts and cares how to provide for that, and allowed nothing for itself? yet these must be cried up for the only happy men in the world; whereas, some poor creatures are to be found (though their outward port and garb in the world renders them despicable) who enjoy more of heaven and true comfort, by the frequent commerce they have with God (as they are at their loom or wheel) in one day, than the other do in all their lives, for all their pomp and fanciful felicities.

What account will such give to God for the expence of their thoughts, the first-born of their souls? What pity is it, that strangers should devour them? The highest improvement whereof, is to send them in embassies to heaven, and converse with God. He who gave man a countenance erect, to walk (not to creep on all four, as some other creatures, with their back upon heaven, and their mouth to the earth), never intended his soul should stoop so below itself, and lick the dust for its food; but rather, that it should look up to God, and enjoy herself in enjoying communion with him, that is the Father of spirits. If it be so sad a spectacle, to behold a man bowed down through the deformities or infirmities of his body, as to go like a beast on all four, hands and feet; much more, to see a soul so crippled with ignorance and sensual affections, that it cannot look up from the earth, where it lies a-groveling, to converse with God its maker.

SECT. II.—Secondly, It reproves those who do indeed shoot now and then to heaven some of these darts of ejaculatory prayer; but in so prophane a way, as makes both God and gracious men to nauseate them.

Did you never hear a vile wretch interlace his discourse with a strange medley of oaths and prayers? Rap out an oath, and send out a vain prayer in the midst of his carnal discourse! *God bless us; God forgive us; God be merciful to us;* such forms of speech many have got, and they come tumbling out when they do not mind what what they say. Now, which do you think is like to get first to heaven, their oaths or their prayers? It is hard to say, whether their swearing or their praying be the worst. What base and low thoughts have these wretches of the great God, to make so bold with his holy and reverend name? which should not be thought or spoken of, without fear and trembling. *The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools;* that is, it is uncomely. *The name of God* doth not fit a profane mouth; the discourse is not equal. One step in hell, and another in heaven, is too great a stride at once to be taken. To shoot one dart at God in an oath, and another to him in a prayer, what can you make of this, but a toying with that which

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is sacred? *Religion and the eye are too tender to be played with* Such prayers as these are shot out of the devil's bow, and are never like to reach heaven, except it be to bring back a curse to him that put them up.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, A reproof to those who content themselves with this kind of prayer.

They will now and then cast a transient glance upon God in a short ejaculation; but never set themselves to seek God in a more solemn way; and is this all thou canst afford? No more but to look in at God's door, and away presently? Dost thou not think that he expects thou shouldst sometimes come to stay longer with him in a more settled communion?

It is true, these occasional visits, when joined with the conscionable performance of the other, is an excellent symptom of a heavenly heart, and speaks grace to be very lively where they are frequent: as when a man between his set meals is so hungry that he must have something to stay his stomach, and yet when dinner or supper come, can feed as heartily as if he had eaten nothing; this shews indeed the man to be healthy and strong; but if a bit by the bye takes away his stomach, that he can eat little or nothing at his ordinary meals, this is not so good a sign.—Thus here, if a Christian, between his set and solemn seeking of God morning and night, finds an inward hunger upon his spirit so strongly craving communion with God, that he cannot stay till his stated hour for prayer returns, but must ever and anon be refreshing itself with the beverage of ejaculatory prayer, and then comes sharp set to duty at his ordinary set-time, this speaks grace to be *in statu athletico*, strong and thriving; but on the contrary, it shews a slighty and naughty spirit, to make these an excuse or plea for the neglect of the other. Thou tastest sure little sweetness, and findest little nourishment from these, or else they would excite thy soul to hunger for further communion with God. As soon as David opened his eyes in the morning, his heart was sallying forth to God. *When I awake, I am still with thee.* And as he walked abroad in the day-time, every occasion led him into the presence of God.

Seven times a-day do I praise thee, that is, often (as it is said, *The righteous fall seven times in a day*). But did these short glances of David's heart steal from the more solemn performance of this duty? No, we find he had his set seasons also, *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud*, Psal. lv. 17. Mr. Ainsworth interprets this place of solemn stated prayer; and it seems to have been the practice of the more devout Jews, to devote three seasons in a day for that duty. I can no more believe him to be frequent and spiritual in ejaculatory prayer, who neglects the season of solemn prayer, than I can believe,

that he keeps every day in the week a Sabbath, who neg ects to keep that one which God hath appointed.

CHAP. XXXII.

An Exhortation to the frequent use of Ejaculatory Prayer, with two or three Helps thereunto.

Use 2. TO the saints. Be ye excited to the frequent exercise of this duty.

I know you are not altogether strangers to it (if you answer your name, and be such as you go for), but it is a more intimate and familiar acquaintance with this kind of prayer that I would gladly lead you into; such an art it is, that were we but skilful traders in it, we should find a blessed advance in our spiritual estate, and soon have more money in our purse, (grace and comfort I mean in our hearts), than now most Christians can shew; we might, by a spiritual alchemy, turn all we touch into gold, extract heaven out of earth, and make wings out of every creature and providence that meet us, to help us in our flight to God: our whole life would be (what I have read of a holy man) *but one communion-day with Christ.* Then neither friends nor foes, joys nor woes, callings nor recreations, (or whatever else we have in this world to do with), should be able to interrupt our acquaintance with him. Whereas now, alas, every thing interposeth, as an opake body, to hide God and heaven from our eye. We who now walk (like travellers in some bottom or low swamp) with our thoughts of heaven so overtopped by the world, that we hardly get a sight of that glorious city to which we are going from morning to night, and thereby lose much of the pleasure of our journey, should then have it, in a manner, always before us, as a joyful prospect in our eye, to solace us in the difficulties of our pilgrimage, and make us gather up our feet more nimbly in the ways of holiness, when we shall see whither they lead us.

We count them pleasantly situated, who live in a climate where the sun is seldom off their horizon. Truly none have such a constant light of inward joy and peace shining upon their souls, as those who are familiarly conversant with this duty: they are *in sole positi* (as is said of the Rhodians) they stand at the best advantage of any other to have, if not a continual, yet a frequent intercourse with God, from whom both the influences of comfort and grace also do all come. And if those trees must needs have the fairest and sweetest fruit which stand most in the sun, then surey they are most likely to excel others, both in comfort and grace,

grace, who are most with God. Every little that the bee brings to the hive (as she flies in and out, though she stays not long on any flower), adds to the stock.

Though the soul makes no long stay with God in this kind of prayer, yet the frequent reiterations thereof conduce much to the increase of its grace. Little gain, with quick returns, makes a heavy purse. Little showers, often following one upon another, plump the corn, and fill the bushels. So do these short spurts (sallies of the soul to heaven) enrich and increase grace in the heart exceedingly. Now if thou shouldst ask, how thou mayest make this kind of ejaculatory prayer more familiar to thee, take these few words of counsel.

First, *Keep thy heart with all diligence* (thy affections I mean).

The very reason why we sally out so seldom toward God in these occasional prayers, is, because the weight of our affections poise us another way. The bowl runs as its bias inclines, the stream flows as the fountain empties itself. If our affections be carnal, to earth we go, and God hath little of our company. *Adam*, it is said, *begat a son in his own likeness*, Gen. v. 3. and so doth the heart of every man. As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly; as is the heavenly, such they also that be heavenly. Labour, therefore, to get and keep thy heart heavenly; especially look to these three affections, thy love, fear, and joy.

First, Thy love: If this fire burn clear, the more of these sparks will from it mount up to God.

Love is a great friend to memory. The adulterer is said *to have his eyes full of the harlot*; and holy love will be as mindful of God. Such a soul will be often setting God in its view. *I have set the Lord always before me*, Psal. xvi. And by often thinking of God, the heart will be enticed into desires after him, Isa. xxvi. 8. *The desire of our soul is to thy name, and remembrance of thee*; and see what follows, ver. 9. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.*

Love sets the soul on musing, and musing on praying. Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore, soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain, the piece charged soon goes off, when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is in *proxima potentia* to prayer. *While I was musing*, saith David, *the fire burned, and I spake with my tongue. Lord, make me know my end*, Psalm xxxix. This was an ejaculatory prayer, shot from his soul, when in the company of the wicked.

Secondly, Thy fear.

Even wicked men, though they be great strangers to prayer, yet we shall hear them knocking at God's door in a fright; much more will a holy fear direct the Christian, upon all occasions, to lift up his heart to God.

Art thou in thy calling? Fear a snare therein, and this will excite thee often in a day to bespeak counsel of God, how to behave thyself therein.

Art thou in company? Fear lest thou shouldst do, or receive hurt, and thou wilt be lifting up thy heart to him that can only keep thee from both. We cannot have a more faithful monitor to mind us of this duty than a holy fear. *They that feared the Lord thought upon his name*, Mal. iii. *At what time I am afraid*, saith David, *I will trust in thee.*

Fear makes us think where our safety lies, and leads us to our refuge. Had not Noah feared a storm, the ark had not been built. Men fear no sin nor danger, and therefore God hears not of them all the day long. The ungodly world, who walk with their back upon heaven, and look not up to God from morning to night, we may tell the reason, *The fear of God is not before their eyes.*

Thirdly, Thy joy and delight in God.

O cherish this. As fear disposeth to pray, so joy to praise. Now, and not till now, the instrument of thy heart is in tune.—One hint now from the providence of God, and touch from his spirit, will set such a soul on work to bless God. Carnal men, when they are frolicksome, and upon the merry pin, then they have their catches and songs, as they sit in their house, or ride on the way: How much more will the gracious soul, that walks in the sense of God's love, be often striking up his harp in holy praises to God? Psalm lxiii. 3. *Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee;* ver. 4. *I will bless thee while I live.* And again, ver. 5. *My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.* See how he goes over and over again the same note.

Joy can no more be hid than ointment; as that bewrayeth itself by its hot and sweet perfumes, so doth holy joy make its own report in the praises it sounds forth to God. It behoves thee, therefore, Christian, to be as chary and choice of thy joy, as thou wouldst be of the blood in thy veins, for in this runs the spirits of praise and thanksgiving. Now, would you nourish your joy? Do it by sucking the promises, those breasts of consolation; these are a food of pure juice, and strong nourishment, they soon turn into blood (joy and peace I mean), and with this a spirit of praise must needs grow also.

Secondly, Possess thy heart with strong apprehensions of God's over-ruling providence in all thy enterprizes, great or small.

That

That he that doth what pleaseth him in heaven and earth, so that all thy labour and toil in any business is in vain, while this main wheel begins to stir; his providence gives countenance to the action. O how would this raise thy heart up to God, and send thee with many an errand into his presence!

Suppose a man was going about some important business, and had him in his company that alone could help or hinder the dispatch of it; were it not strange that he should travel all day with him, and not apply himself to this person to make him his friend? This is thy very case, Christian; thou and all thy affairs are at the absolute disposure of the great God, to bless or blast thee in every enterprize; if thou hast not his vote, thy business is stopped in the head. Now this God is always in thy company, whether at home or abroad, in thy bed, or at thy board. Surely didst thou believe this firmly, thou wouldst often in a day turn thyself to him, and beg his good-will to favour thy undertaking, and facilitate thy business for thee.

Thirdly, Look thou complicst with the motions of the holy spirit.

The Christian shall find him as his remembrancer, to mind him of the more solemn performance of this duty of prayer, so his monitor to suggest many occasional meditations to his thoughts (even amidst worldly employments), as a hint that now it is a fit time to give God a visit in some holy ejaculation (by thus setting the door, as it were, open for him into God's presence); sometimes he will be recalling a truth thou hast read or heard, a mercy thou hast received, or a sin thou hast committed: and what means he by all these? but to do thee a friendly office, that, by these, thy affections being stirred, thou mayest be invited to dart thy soul up to God in some ejaculation suitable to his motion. Now take the hint he gives, and thou shalt have more of his company and help in this kind. For as the evil spirit, where he finds welcome to his wicked suggestions, grows bold to knock oftener at that door, because it is so soon opened to him; so the holy spirit is invited, where his motions are kindly entertained, to be more frequent in these his kind approaches, whereas thy neglect of them may cause him to withdraw, and leave thee to thy own slothful spirit. When Christ had thrice made an attempt to awake his drowsy disciples, by calling them up to watch and pray, and they fell to nodding again, truly then he bids them *sleep on.*

CHAP. XXXIII.

Of Secret or Closet Prayer, that it is a Duty incumbent on us, and why.

SECONDLY, The second kind of *prayer* is that which we called *composed*, because the Christian composeth himself more solemnly to the work, by setting some considerable time apart from his other occasions, for his more free and full communion with God in prayer. Now this is either *secret*, or *performed jointly with others*.

We begin with the first of these, *Secret Prayer*.

When the Christian retireth into some secret place, free from all company, and there pours out his soul into the bosom of God, none being witnsss to this trade he drives with heaven, but God and himself.

I shall here, first, Prove this to be a duty incumbent upon us.

And secondly, Give the reasons why.

SECT. I.—First, That it is the Christian's duty, secretly and solitarily, to hold intercourse with God in prayer, I believe will be granted of more than practise it, even those that are strangers to the performance thereof, carry in their own bosom that which will accuse them for their neglect, except by long looking on the light, and rebelling against the same, their foolish minds be darkened, and have lost all sight and sense of a deity.

If any prayer be a duty, then secret prayer must needs be one. This is to all the other, as the *carina*, or keel, is to the ship; it bears up all the rest. If we look into the practice of scripture-saints, we shall find them all to have been great dealers with God in this trade of secret prayer: Abraham had his grove whither he retired *to call upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God*, Gen. xxi. 33. We meet Isaac walking out into the fields, to seek some secret place, where he might more freely, with deep meditation, compose himself for this work, Gen. xxiv. 63. Neither was Rebekah a stranger to this duty, who, upon the babes struggling in her womb, *went to enquire of the Lord*, Gen. xxv. 32. which, saith Calvin, was to pray in secret. Jacob is famous for his wrestling, as it were, hand to hand, with God in the night.

Holy David's life was little else; *he gave himself to prayer*, Psal. cix. 4. Allow but some time spent by him for nature's refection, and the necessary occasions of his public employment (which yet came in but as a parenthesis), and you shall find him most of the rest laid out in meditation and prayer, as appears,

Psal.

Psal. cxix. We have Elias at prayer under the juniper-tree; Peter on the leads, Cornelius in a corner of his house; yea, our blessed Saviour, whose soul could have fasted longest without any inward impair, through the want of this repast, yet none more frequent in it; early in the morning he is praying alone, Mark i. 35. and late in the evening, Matt. xiv. 23. and this was his usual practice, as may be gathered from Luke xxii. 39. compared with Luke xxi. 37.

Thus Christ sanctified this duty by his own example; yea, we have a sweet promise to the due performance of it, and God doth not use to promise a reward for that work, which he commanded us not to do, Mat. vi. 6. *But, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* Where our Saviour takes it for granted, that every child of God will be often praying to his heavenly Father, and therefore he rather encourageth them in the work he seeth them about, than commands them to it. *When you pray*, as if he had said, I know you cannot live without praying, now when you would give God a visit, *enter into thy closet*, &c.

SECT. II.—But why must the Christian maintain this secret intercourse with God?

First, In regard of God; he hath an eye to see our secret tears, and an ear to hear our secret groans, therefore we ought to pour them out to him in secret. It is a piece of gross superstition to bind this only to place or company: *I will*, saith the apostle, *that men pray every where, lifting up pure hands*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. God is every where to be found, at church and at home, with our family, and in our closet; and therefore we are to pray every where. Oh! what a comfort is it to a gracious soul, that he can never be out of God's sight or hearing wherever he is thrown, and therefore never out of his care? For it is out of sight, out of mind.

This comforted holy David; his friends and kinsmen, they, alas! were afar off, he might lie upon his sick bed, and cry till his heart ached, and not make them hear; but see how he pacifies himself in this his solitude, *Lord, my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee*, Psal. xxxviii. Little thought Jacob that he had a son prisoner in Egypt, laden there with irons, that entered into his soul; but he had a God that was nigh unto him all the time of his distress, and heard the cry of the poor prisoner, though his earthly father never dreamed of any such matter.

Great and rich are the returns which in scripture we find to be sent from heaven, upon the solitary adventure of the saints in this bottom. *This poor man cried*, said David, *and the Lord saved*

him out of all his troubles, Psal. xxxiv. 6.; as if he had said, haply you are afraid to be so bold as to go alone and visit God in secret; though you dare venture to join with others in prayer, and hope to find welcome when you go with such good company, yet you are ready to say, will God look upon me, or my single prayer? Yes, behold me, saith David, who am newly come from his door, where I lay praying in as poor a condition, and as sad a plight, as ever beggar was at man's: a poor exile, in the midst of enemies that thirsted for my blood; yet I, and that when I betrayed so much dastardly unbelief, as to scrabble on the wall like a madman, cried, and God heard.

Who then need be afraid either from his outward straits or inward infirmities, if sincere, to go with a humble boldness unto God? Nay, further, as God hath a pitiful eye to see when we pray in secret, so also an angry eye that sees when we do not.—I have read of a prince that would in the evening walk abroad in a disguise, and listen under his subjects windows, whether they talked of him, and what they said; to be sure God's eye and ear watcheth us, *The Lord hearkened and heard it*, Mal. iii. 16.—And he that hath a book of remembrance for his saints that fear him, and think upon his name, hath also a black bill for their names who shut him out of their hearts and closets. *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God.* Though his seat be in heaven, yet his eye is on earth; and what doth he observe, *but whether men understand and seek God?*

Secondly, In regard of ourselves, the more to prove our sincerity.

I do not say, that to pray in secret amounts to an infallible character of sincerity, for hypocrisy may creep into our closet, when the door is shut closest, as the frogs did into Pharaoh's bed-chamber; yet this is not the hypocrite's ordinary walk: and though his heart may be naught that frequently performs secret duty, yet to be sure his heart cannot be good whose devotion is all spent before men, and is a mere stranger to secret communion with God: or else our Saviour, in drawing the hypocrite's picture, would not have made this to be the very cast of his countenance, Mat. vi. 5. *When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues*, &c. *But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.*

The command sends us as well to the closet as to the church, and he is a hypocrite that chooseth one, and neglects the other, for thereby it appears he makes conscience of neither: he likes that which may gain him the name of religious in the opinion of men; and therefore puts on a religious habit abroad, but in the mean time lives like an atheist at home. Such a one may for a time

time be the world's saint, but God will at last uncase him, and present him before the eyes of all the world for a hypocrite. The true lover delights to visit his friend when he may find him alone, and enjoy privacy with him; and I have read of a devout person, who, when the set time for his private devotions were come, would, whatever company he was in, break from them, with this handsome speech, *I have a friend that stays for me, farewell.* It is worth parting with our best friends on earth, to enjoy communion with the God of heaven. One called his friends thieves, because they stole time from him. None worse thieves, than they who rob us of our praying seasons.

Thirdly, In regard to the duty itself; and the influence which the holy management of it would have upon the Christian's life.

This duty is a main pillar to uphold the whole frame of our spiritual building; without this, the Christian's house, as Solomon saith of the sluggard's, will drop out at the windows. That which is most necessary to keep the house standing is under ground, (I mean the foundation), that which keeps the man alive is the heart in his breast, that is unseen. Cease your secret communion, and you undermine your house, you stab godliness to the heart. If the tree grow not in the root, it will ere long wither in the branch. He that declines this way, can be a gainer in no other; how zealous soever he may appear, all without this is but a distempered heat (as when the outward parts burn, but the inward chill); such a one may pray to the quickening and comfort of others, but he will get little of either himself.

The truth is, this is the first step towards apostacy; backsliders grow first out of acquaintance with God in secret, their delight in this duty declines by little and little, then are they less frequent in their visits, upon which follows a casting off the duty quite; and yet they may appear great sticklers and zealots in public ordinances: but if they recover not what they have lost in their secret trade, they will ere long break here also.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Wherein is shewn the low Stoop of the Divine Majesty, to hold Communion with a single Saint in his Closet Prayer; as also how they bring their Grace into Question who live in the total Neglect of this Kind of Prayer.

Use 1. LET us here admire the condescending love of God, in stooping to hold any communion with his poor creatures, while

while they are clad with rags of mortality, and those besmeared also with many sinful pollutions.

It is not enough that in heaven, when we shall put on our robes of glory (befitting the attendance of so great a king), that then he will take us into his royal presence, and give us places with those that stand about him? But will he even now, while our garments smell of the prison, and before our grave-clothes be quite thrown off, admit us to so near an accession? What manner of love is this, that we should now be called the children of God, and as such have liberty to speak our gibberish and broken language, and that with delight to him, who continually hath the praises of blessed angels and glorified saints sounding in his ears?

Nay, yet more, this liberty to be indulged us, not only when we come together, and make up a choir in our public worship, but in our solitary and secret addresses; that a poor creature, whenever himself hath but a heart to step aside, and give God a visit in any corner of his house, should find the arms of so great a majesty open to embrace him; this is so stupendous, that we may better admire than express it. Should we see a poor beggar speaking familiarly with a great king, who, while all his courtiers stand bare before him, takes him into his embraces, and lets him familiarly whisper in his ear, might it not draw forth our wonderment at such an act of grace from majesty to beggary? This is the glorious privilege of every saint on earth, who, when he prays, hath liberty to come up to the throne of God surrounded with glorious angels, and into his bosom to pour out his soul as freely, as the child may speak to his indulgent father. O thank our good friend and brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, for this; it is he that brings us into the presence of God, and sets us before his face, as Joseph his brethren before Pharaoh.

Whose face need a saint fear to look upon, that may thus boldly speak to God? Comfort thyself with this, Christian, when thou goest with thy petition to any great man on earth, and he will not be seen of thee, or such a rich kinsman, and he will not own thee; turn thy back on them both, and go to thy God, he will look on thee, and in his Son own thee for his child: thou hast his ear that can command their heart and purse too. Jacob's prayer altered his brother's purposes, that he who meant to kill him, falls on his neck to kiss him. Nehemiah had a boon to beg of the Persian king, and he goes, a carnal heart would think, the farthest way about to obtain it; he knocks first at heaven door, *Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man*, Nehem. i. 11. and now to court he goes, where, behold, he finds the door open before he knocks, for the king *said unto him, For what dost thou make request?* chap. ii. 4. We may, you see, open two doors with this one key; at the

the prayer of this holy man, God and man both give their gracious answer.

The Christian surely cannot long be in want, if he can but pray: As one said, The Pope could never want money so long as he could hold a pen in his hand. It is but praying in faith, and the thing is done which the Christian would have: *Be careful for nothing, but let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God shall keep your hearts,* &c. Phil. iv. *Commit thy way to the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass,* Psalm xxxvii. The saints' bills are received at first sight, whatever the sum is. Christ is our undertaker to see it paid, and his credit holds still in his Father's bosom, and will, to procure welcome for all his saints, even to the least and last of them that shall be found on earth.

Secondly, This blots their names from among the number of saints, that were never acquainted with this duty.

What! a saint! and content with what thou hast of God in joint communion with others at church or family, so as never to desire any privacy between God and thyself? Canst find no errand to invite thee to speak with God alone? thou bringest thy saintship into question. When a prince passeth by in the street, then all (even strangers themselves) will come in a throng to see him: but his child thinks not this enough, but goes home with him, must live with him, and be under his eye daily.—Hypocrites and profane ones will crowd into public ordinances, but a gracious soul cannot live without more retired converse with him.

CHAP. XXXV.

An Exhortation to the Saints to hold up their Acquaintance with God in Secret Prayer, and some Directions as to their Management of it.

THIRDLY, Be exhorted, O ye saints, to hold up your secret acquaintance with God.

I am persuaded (as Paul said to Festus in another case) *that none of these things which I have spoken,* concerning this duty, *are hid from thee,* if a saint. *Believest thou* that this is thy duty? *I know that thou believest.* Dost thou pray in secret? I dare not question it; the spirit of Christ which is in thee will not suffer thee to be wholly a stranger from it. But I would provoke thee to be more abounding therein: *These things have I written,*

written, saith John, *unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God*, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God, 1 John v. 13.; that is, that you may believe more; and these things do I now write unto you, that call upon the name of God in secret, that you may call on God oftener; and this you need, except you live farther from God's quarters than the rest of your brethren do; no duty more opposed by satan or our own slothful hearts than this: The devil can allow you your church prayers, your family duties, and now and then a formal one in your closet too, and yet make his market of you. Therefore take along with you these three or four directions for your better managing thereof.

First, Let it be your constant trade.

Rolling stones get no moss; unstable and unconstant hearts will never excel in this or any other duty. The spirit of prayer is a grace infused, but advanced to farther degrees by daily exercise. Frequency begets familiarity, and familiarity, confidence. We go boldly into his house whom we often visit.

Secondly, Let it be true secret prayer, and not have its name for nought; take heed no noise be heard abroad of what thou dost in secret.

Enter into thy closet, saith Christ, *and when thou hast shut thy door, pray:* Be sure thou shuttest it so close that no wind of vain glory comes in; rather than there should, shut the door of thy lips as well as of thy closet; God can hear, though thy mouth delivers not the message. It is true, when Daniel prayed he opened his window, but it was to shew his faith, not his pride, that he might let the world know how little he feared their wrath, not that he coveted their praise. God curiously observes which way their eye turns, and it is a dishonour he will not bear, that thou shouldst be pensioner to the world, in expecting thy reward from man, and not himself. Lose not God's *Euge* for man's *Plaudite*, that is, to change heaven for earth, and that is a bad bargain.

Thirdly, Be free and open, come not to God in secret, and then keep thy secrets from him; speak thy very heart, and hide nothing from him.

To be reserved and close is against the law of friendship. *I have called you friends*, saith Christ, *for all things I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.* Is Christ so open hearted, not to conceal any thing he knows for our good? and wouldst thou have any secret box in thy cabinet, that he (if thou couldst help it) shouldst not see? Art thou confessing sins? strip thy soul naked, and shuffle not with God; if thou dost, it speaks one of these two things, that thou hast some secret design of sin for the future, or harbourest an ill opinion of God in thy breast concerning

concerning thy past sins, as if he would not be faithful to forgive what thou art free to confess: Like some prodigal child, who, though his father promiseth to pay all his debts, and forgive him also; yet because the sum is vast, dares not trust his father with the whole truth, but conceals some in his confession. The first of these is not the spot of God's children, but into the latter they sometimes fall, and for a while may be held by satan's policy, and their own unbelief.

But consider, Christian, whatever thy sin is, and how great soever, yet the way to obtain pardon is by confessing, not concealing it; neither is it concealed from God, though thou confess it not. But God likes a confession out of thine own mouth so well, that as soon as thou dost lay open thy own shame, he hath obliged himself faithfully to cover it with the mantle of pardoning mercy, 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins.* Again, art thou making thy request to God? Carry no burden away upon thy spirit through a foolish modesty and fear of troubling God too much, or asking too deep, so long as the promise is on thy side. Christ never complained that his saints opened their mouths, or enlarged their desires too wide in prayer; nay, he bids his disciples open them wider, and tells them, *They had asked nothing:* that is, nothing proportionable to the large heart in his breast to give.

Fourthly, It must be seasonable; this gives every thing its beauty.

1. Take heed that it doth not jostle with public worship; the devil takes great pleasure in setting the ordinances of God at variance one against another: Some he persuades to cry up public prayer, and neglect secret; and others he would fain bring out of love with the public, by applauding the other; whereas there is room enough for both in thy Christian course. Moses, though he killed the Egyptian, yet the two Israelites, when scuffling together, he laboured to reconcile. Beware of giving satan such an advantage, as to neglect the communion of saints in public, under a pretence of praying in thy closet; this is to set one ordinance to fight with another; they are sister ordinances, set them not at variance. Deny thy presence in public, and thou art sure to lose God's presence in thy closet. Prov. xxviii. 9. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.*

2. Look that it interferes not with thy duty in thy particular calling. As thou art to shut thy closet door to pray, so to open thy shop windows for following thy calling in the world. Go into thy closet before thy shop, or else thou art an atheist; but when thou hast been with God there, attend thy shop and calling, or else thou art an hypocrite. Thou consistest of soul and body; God

God divides thy employment between both; he that is not diligent in the duty he owes God concerning both, is conscientious in neither,

When every part of the body hath its due nourishment distributed to it, health is preserved. So here, he is the sound Christian that divides his care wisely for his spiritual state, and temporal also. Sleep not away thy time for prayer in the morning, and then think thou art sufficiently excused for omitting it, because thy worldly business calls thee another way. Jade not thy body with over-labouring, nor overcharge thy mind with too heavy a load of worldly cares in the day, and then think, that the weariness of the one, and the discomposure of the other, will discharge thee from praying again at night: this is to make a sin thy apology for neglecting a duty.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Of Family Prayer: wherein is proved, That it is the Duty of those that have the Charge of a Family to set up the Worship of God in it.

THE second kind of composed prayer is that which is performed in joint communion with others; and this is double: either private or public, family-prayer or church-prayer. I begin with the first, family-prayer.

By a family, I mean a society of certain persons, in mutual relation each to other, natural or civil, who live together under the domestic government of husband, master, or parent. Wherever such a family is found, it is the duty of the governor of it to set up the worship of God there, and this part of worship in particular, prayer in his family. The Jews had their family-sacrifice, Exod. xii. 21. which the master of the house performed at home with his family. There still remains a spiritual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, which every master of a family is with his household to offer up to God. The private house is the Christian's *chapel of ease*, to worship God daily in with his company. The church began in a family, and it is upheld still by the piety of private families: if the nursery be not preserved, the orchard must needs in time decay.

Quest. But the question will be, How can it be proved that family-prayer is a duty?

Answ. I hope none will require an express place of scripture commanding this *in terminis*, or else not believe it a duty incumbent

bent upon them. This were the way not only to lose this part of God's worship, but other duties also. It will trouble us to find an express word commanding us in *totidem verbis*, or in plain terms, to keep the Christian Sabbath, or to baptize our infant children; yet God forbid we should, with some, shake off these ordinances upon this account. That which by necessary consequence can be deduced from scripture, is scripture, as well as that which is laid down in express terms. And if this will content you, which I am sure it should, I will hope to give you some satisfaction.

SECT. I.—First, That general command for prayer, will bring this of family-prayer within the compass of our duty, 1 Tim. ii. 8. *I will therefore that men pray every where;* if every where, then surely, saith Mr. Perkins upon this place, in our families, where God hath set us in so near relation to one another. Paul salutes the church in Aquilla and Priscilla's house, Rom. xvi. 5. And were they not a strange church who live together without praying together? Had they deserved so high and honourable a name, if they had thus shut God out of doors? This were to call them a church, as a grove is called *lucus a non lucendo.*

The Jews, when they built any of them a new house to dwell in, they were to dedicate it, Deut. xx. 5. and the manner of their dedicating their new-built houses was with prayer, as you may see by the title of the thirtieth Psalm, penned on this occasion, *A psalm and song at the dedication of David's house.*

This they did, first to express their thankfulness to God, who had given them an habitation: indeed it is no small mercy to have a settled place for our abode, a convenient house for ourselves and relations peaceably to dwell in; it is more than those precious saints had, Heb. xi. 38. *who wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth;* yea, than Christ himself had, Mat. viii. 20. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath no where to lay his head.*

2. By this, they were admonished to acknowledge themselves tenants to God, and that they held their houses of him their great landlord, upon condition of doing him homage, by making their houses as so many sanctuaries for his worship while they lived in them. So Mollerus upon the place.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The trust which governors of families are charged with, will evince it is their duty to set up prayer in their families.

Every master of a family hath *curam animarum*, he hath the care of souls upon him, as well as the minister; he is prophet, king,

king, and priest in his own house, and from every one of these will appear this his duty.

1. He is a prophet, to teach and instruct his family. Wives are bid to learn at home of their husbands, 1 Cor. xiv. then sure they are to teach them at home. Parents are commanded to instruct their children, *Ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house*, Deut. xi. 19. *To bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, Eph. vi. Now there is a teaching and admonition by prayer to God, and praising of God, as in the catechising of them, Col. iii. 16. *Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns.* The master's praying with his family, will teach them how to pray when by themselves: the confessions he makes, petitions he puts up, and mercies he acknowledgeth in his family duty, are an excellent means to furnish them with matter for their devotions. How comes it to pass that many servants and children, when they come to be themselves heads of families, are so unable to be their relations' mouth to God in prayer? but because they have in their minority lived in prayerless families, and were kept in ignorance of this duty, whereby they have neither head nor heart, knowledge or affection, suitable for such a work.

Again, He is a king in his house, to rule his family in the fear of God: as the political magistrate's duty is to set up the true worship of God in his kingdom, so he is to do it in his house; he is to say with Joshua, *I and my house we will serve the Lord.* Were it a sin in a prince, though he served God himself in his palace, if yet he did not set up the public worship of God in his kingdom? Surely then it is a sin in the governor of a family, not to set it up in his house, though he prays himself in his closet?

Lastly, He is a priest in his own house, and where there is a priest, there must be a sacrifice; and what sacrifice among Christians, but the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving? Thus David, we find, went from public ordinances to perform private duty with his family, *Then David returned to bless his household;* that is, saith one upon the place, he returned to worship God in private with them, and to crave a blessing from God upon them. And this hints a third particular.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, The practice of saints in all ages hath been to have a religious care of their families.

Good Joshua promised for himself and his house, that they would serve the Lord. If he meant the inward worship of God, he promised more than he was able to perform, in regard of his family, for he could not thrust grace into their hearts: we must therefore understand him, that it should not be his fault if they did not, for he would use all the means in his power to make them do

do so; he would set them a holy copy in his own example, and he would take care that they should not live without the worship of God in his family.

We find Elisha praying with his servants, 2 Kings iv. 33. master and man together. Queen Esther and her maids keeping a private fast in her family, Esther iv. 16. Now it were uncharitable to think, that she was a stranger to the ordinary exercise of this duty, who was so forward to perform the extraordinary, and put others also upon it: surely this gracious woman did not begin her acquaintance with this duty now, and take it up only at a dead lift in her present strait. That were a gluttonous fast indeed, that should devour the worship of God in her family for all the year after.

Cornelius's family religion is upon record, Acts x. 2. *A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.* Mark, he was a devout man, and feared God with all his house: fear is oft put for the worship of God. God is called the *fear of Isaac*, Gen. xxx. 53. that is, the God whom Isaac worshipped, 2 Kings xvii. 36. *Him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship. Neither shall ye fear other gods*, ver. 37. that is, ye shall not worship or pray unto them. Thus we may conceive Cornelius was a devout man, and feared God with his house. Surely he that was so merciful to the poor at his door, to refresh their pinched bowels with his alms, could not be so cruel to his relations' souls within his house, as to lock up his religion in a closet from them?

CHAP. XXXVII.

Three Objections, against setting up this Duty in Families, answered.

Quest. BUT what necessity is there that a family must meet jointly to worship God together? Will it not serve if every one prays for himself in his closet?

Ans. A family is a collective body; as such, it owes a worship to God.

It is he that *setteth the solitary in families*, Psal. lxviii. 6. and as their founder, will be vouched by them; *pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name*, Jer. x. 23. It holds in domestic families as well as national, for he rears up the one as well as the other. There are family sins, and these are to be

confessed by the family, as national sins by the nation. There are family wants, and they require the joint supplications of the family. There are family occasions and employments, and those call for the united force of the family, to pull down a blessing upon their joint labours for the good of the whole society. *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.* And is it not fit that they who join in the work, should join in prayer for a blessing on their endeavours?

There are family mercies that the whole society share in; and is it not meet, that they which eat of the same feast, should join in the same song of praise to the founder of it? In a word, there are judgments that may wrap up the whole family; and where all are concerned in the danger, all should lend their help to prevent it: and many hands make light work. A rope twisted of many cords is stronger than those very cords would be if single; and so the prayer of many together more prevalent, because likely to be more fervent, than of the same persons severally employed in their closets, though I would not learn one to jostle with the other; there is room for both, why should they fall out? Polanus, in his *Syntag. de Terræmotu,* tells us of a town in the territory of Berne, in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, that was, in the year 1584, destroyed by an earthquake, except the half of one house, where the master of the family was earnestly praying with his wife and children upon their bended knees to God.

Object. O but I have not abilities and gifts for such a work; and better left undone, than spoiled in the doing.

Ans. No more hadst thou skill and ability for thy trade when thou wentest first to be an apprentice.

Apply thy mind to the work, bind the duty upon thy conscience, search the scripture, where matter for prayer is laid up, and rules how to perform the duty. Study thy heart, and observe the state of thy family, till the sense of the sins, wants, and daily mercies thereof, which thou hast lodged in thy memory, be left warm on thy spirit. In a word, exercise thyself frequently in secret prayer, be earnest there for his spirit to enable thee in thy family service; and take heed of driving the holy spirit from thee, whose assistance thou prayest for, by sloth, worldliness, pride, or any other course of wickedness. Then up, and be doing, and thou mayest comfortably expect God will be with thee, both to assist and accept thee in the work.

Moses was sick of his employment that God called him to, and fain would have put it off with this mannerly excuse, *I am not eloquent, but am of slow speech.* But this objection was soon answered, *and the Lord said unto Moses, Who makes the dumb to speak? who hath made man's mouth? have not I the Lord?*

Now

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say, Exod. iv. 11. His call was extraordinary, and his assistance was such. Thy call to this duty (as the head of a family) is ordinary, and so thou mayest look for ordinary assistance; haply thou shalt never have an ability (to such a degree) with a flow of words, to express thyself as some others, but let not that discourage thee; God looks not at the pomp of words, and variety of expressions, but the sincerity and devotion of the heart. The key opens not the door because gilt, but because fitted to the wards of the lock.

Let but the matter of thy prayer be according to God's mind, holy and warrantable, and the temper of thy heart humble and fervent, and no fear but thou shalt speed. Yea, let the prayer be old, pray to-day what thou didst yesterday, but be sure to bring new affections with thy old prayer, and thou shalt be friendly received into God's presence, though thou canst not on a sudden put thy requests into a new shape. God will not shut his child out of doors, because he comes not every day in a new-fashioned suit.

Object. Others there are who object not their own weakness as the reason of their not praying in their families, but the wickedness of others in their family. They are confident enough of their own gifts, but question others' grace, and whether they may pray with such.

Answ. Thirdly, I will grant there are such in thy family, but is this a ground to lay aside the worship of God? Little thinkest thou whither this principle will lead: by this principle, the worship of God should not only be laid aside in most private houses, but in all our public congregations also. If thou mayest not pray in thy family, because a wicked person is present, then not join in prayer with any public congregation, because thou canst never be assured that they are all godly; nor must the minister pray there, for fear some wicked one should be in the company; and so this part of divine worship must be thrown out of the church, till we can find an assembly made up of all true saints; and where such a one ever was, or will be, on this side heaven, none I think is able to tell.

Surely the saints in scripture were not thus scrupulous. How oft did Christ himself pray with his disciples, though a Judas was among them? I have elsewhere clearly, I think, proved, it is the duty of all, even of the wicked, to pray; and that God will never charge the act of prayer upon him as sin, but his obliquity therein; much less will he impute to thee another's sinful frame of heart, with whom thou joinest in prayer. Pray thou in faith, and his unbelief shall not prejudice thy faith, nor his pride thy humility. Thou joinest with him in the duty, but hast no com-

munion with his sin. You may as well say, if a cut-purse in the time of prayer should pick another's pocket, that all the company are guilty of his theft.

How much better were it, Christian, to fear lest thou pray with a wicked heart in thy own bosom, than with a wicked person in thy family? Thou art like neither to hurt thy own soul by praying in his company; nor better his, by omitting the duty for his sake. May be though he be carnal, yet he is outwardly complying, and how knowest thou but thy prayer (especially in his presence) may pierce his heart, and give a lift towards his conversion? Such I have heard of, who have had the first sensible impression made upon their hearts in this duty of prayer. If he be not only carnal, but a mocker of the worship of God, and a disturber of the duty; better thou shouldst, with Abraham, turn such an Ishmael out of doors, than for his sake turn God out of doors, by denying him the worship due unto him.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

A Reproof to those that unnecessarily throw themselves to live in such Families where the Worship of God is not set up.

Use 1. OF reproof to those Christians, who needlessly and upon choice throw themselves upon such families, where the worship of God is not set up.

Dost thou know whither thou goest? thou art running with Jonah from the presence of the Lord, and mayest expect a storm to be sent after thee. Haply thou art a servant, who once didst live in a godly family, where thou hadst many sweet privileges, and spiritual advantages, a table spread daily for thy soul as oft as for thy body (besides some exceedings now and then of extraordinary duties), and thereby didst enjoy a kind of heaven upon earth; but for a little ease in thy work, or gain in thy wages, thou hast made this unhappy change, to put thyself under the roof of those who will sooner learn thee to curse and swear, than to pray; and where, by the order kept in the family, thou canst not know a Lord's-day from a week-day, or whether there be such a thing as religious worship or invocation due to thy Maker or no.

Alas, poor creature! What! wert thou even now in so green a pasture, and now wandering upon the barren heath, where nothing is to be got for thy precious soul? where (as on the mountains

tains of Gilboa) none of those heavenly dews fall with which thy soul was wont to be wet and watered? Truly thou art gone out of God's blessing into the warm sun. Had God indeed cast thee by a necessary providence on such a place, thou mightest then have hoped to keep thy spiritual plight, though wanting thy former repast, but being thy own choice, it is to be feared thou wilt soon pine and languish in thy spiritual state; leanness is like to shrivel up thy soul, while thou hast thy fat morsels in thy mouth. Thy spirit will grow light and poor, though thy purse may grow heavy: we shall have thee ere long complain (as Naomi) that thou *wentest out full, but camest home empty*. How darest thou chuse to dwell, where God himself doth not by his gracious presence? *He inhabits the praises of his people*, and takes his abode in the house of prayer. And if the holy spirit dwells not, walks and breathes not in the house, it must needs be haunted with the evil one. Make thy stay there as short as may be. Leave the dead to dwell with the dead, atheist with atheist; thy safety will be to get among better company. Is the church so barren of godly families, that none such are to be found who will open their door to let thee in? Go, enquire where such live, and offer to do the meanest office in that house where thou mayest enjoy thy former privileges for thy soul, rather than stay where thou art. The very beasts groan to serve the wicked, whereas holy angels themselves disdain not to minister unto the saints.

Quest. But haply thou wilt say, 'Tis not thy choice, but necessity. Thou art by thy parents put apprentice to a master that is wicked, or thou livest under thy own parent's shadow, and thou canst not help it though they be prophane; or with an husband whom thou didst hope (at thy choice of him) would prove a meet help to thy soul, but thou findest it otherwise; what would you have us in this case to do?

Answ. First, Mourn under it as thy great affliction.

Thus David did, when he lived in Saul's wicked family, whose court and family, for irreligion and profaneness, he compared to the barbarous Arabians, and prophane Ishmaelites, lamenting that he was cooped up with such, whom by his relation he could not well leave, and for their wickedness he could worse bear; *Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshek, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.*

2. Be the more in thy secret communion with God.

If thou didst live with a niggard, who pinched thee for thy belly, wouldst thou not, though thou hadst but a penny in thy purse, lay it out for bread, rather than starve? Thou hadst need have a bit the more in a corner, because thou art cut short of thy daily bread in thy family. Thy soul cannot live without communion with God; take that thyself which others will not

be so kind to allow thee; and that thou mayest do this, husband all thy ends of time the better. Thou shalt thus, by God's blessing,

1. Keep thy spiritual life and vigour.

2. Be antidoted against the infection of that prophane air thou breathest in; and,

3. Have a vent to ease thy incumbered spirit of those reproaches and trials thou canst not but meet with from such relations. Gracious Hannah had an adversary in the same family (Peninnah by name), who provoked her sorely, even to make her fret; but this sent her to God in prayer, and there she eased her soul of her burden.

Thirdly, Adorn thy piety to God by faithful performance of thy duty to thy relations (though they be not so good as thou desirest.)

Art thou a servant, and thy master prophane? be thou submissive and humble, diligent, and faithful; let him see that thou darest not rob him of thy time by sloth, or wrong him in his estate by falseness (though he be a thief to thy soul by not providing for it), but do with thy utmost skill and strength endeavour to discharge thy trust to him.

We see too oft, that the unfaithfulness and negligence of some professing servants, do set their carnal masters further off from the worship of God than before they were, yea, make them loathe the duties of religion, which otherwise they might have been won unto, till at last they come to think all profession and forwardness in the duties of piety towards God, to be but an hypocritical cloak to cover some unfaithfulness to men, and to say of their servants, when they beg leave to go to a sermon, and wait on God in his ordinances, as Pharaoh of the Israelites, *Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore do ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord*, Exod. v. 17. Thus the apostle tells us, the name of God and his doctrine comes to be blasphemed by the ill behaviour of professing servants, 1 Tim. vi. 1.

Again, Art thou a wife, and thy husband carnal, who lives without any care of his own soul, or those under his roof? Pray the more for him, because he prays not with thee; pray thou for thy family in thy closet, tho' he neglect it in the house; but with this, be sure to commend thy piety to thy husband's conscience, and make it as legible as may be to his eye, by thy meekness of wisdom in thy carriage to him, and whole conversation in thy family. A fair print invites to read the book; religion, fairly printed in thy meek and dutiful behaviour to him, and discretion in all thy affairs, how knowest thou but it may in time win him to the consideration of the excellency of religion, which makes thee so officious and faithful to him? He is an unwise angler, that

that scares the fish he desires to take; and she an unwise Christian, that, by her peevish and undutiful carriage, offends her husband, whose conversion she desires and prays for.

CHAP. XXXIX.

A Word of Counsel to those that live in Praying Families.

Use 2.[1] A Word of counsel to you, whom God hath planted in religious families.

First, Bless God for casting thy lot in so pleasant a seat, and so fruitful a soil for thy soil, where thou mayest suck in the sweet air of God's spirit, that breathes from thy godly parents or other governors, at the throne of grace, from day to day; that thou art not wedged into some blind atheistical family, there to live with a godless crew, among whom thou mightest have passed thy days without any knowledge of thy maker, and with them have been involved in that curse of God, which is in the house of the wicked, and hangs like a black cloud in the threatening, ready to pour down upon the families that call not upon his name. Look round thy neighbourhood, and see how many families there are who live like brutes (as in so many dark caves and dens), where none of that heavenly light is seen, from one end of the year to the other, which shines on thy face every day. What nurture and breeding should thy soul have had under the tutoring of such parents and masters, who themselves live without God in the world?

The queen of Sheba counted them happy that stood before Solomon, not so much that they might see his pomp, but hear his wisdom. O happy thou (if grace to know thy privilege), that thou ministerest unto a godly master, art under gracious parents, or yoked to a holy husband, from whose devout prayers, pious counsels, and Christian example, thou mayest gain more, than if they had the wealth, delicacies, and preferments of Solomon's court to confer upon thee.

Secondly, Look you make improvement of this spiritual advantake, or else it will go worse with you than others.

Rebellious Israel is told, *They shall know that they had a prophet among them:* the meaning is, they shall know it to their cost; and so shall those that have lived in families, under such governors, who went before them, and, as it were, chalked out a way to heaven by their godly example, lamenting over their precious souls so oft with their prayers and tears: if such miscarry,

they shall know to their terror what families they once lived in, but had not a heart to prize or improve the mercy. God forbid that any of you should find the way to hell out of such doors, and force your way to damnation through such means afforded to prevent it.

What will Cain answer, when his father that begat him shall bear witness against him, and say, Lord, this wicked child of mine never learned his atheism of me; I brought him to thy worship, and taught him thy fear, but he liked it not, and first proved a murderer, and then an apostate: first he behaved himself wickedly in thy service, and then ran out of thy doors and cast it quite off? What will then the flouting wife of David, who, though of a wicked stock, was privileged with so gracious a husband, say, when she shall be accused for making him her laughing-stock for his zeal in the worship of God? Or, how will the wicked children of the same holy man, who walked with such uprightness in his house, look their godly father in the face at the great day? You, my children, said dying Mr. Bolton, dare not, I believe, meet me at the day of judgment in an unregenerate state. The weight of such holy men's prayers and admonitions will then sink their ungodly relations deeper into hell, than others who drop thither out of dark and blind families.

CHAP. XL.

A Word to those Governors of Families, that have not the Worship of God in their Houses.

THIRDLY, Unto you that are heads of families, but yet have not had a heart to set up the worship of God in them.

I am afraid God hath little from you in your closets, who hath none in your families; it is no breach of charity to suspect your care for your own souls, that shew none for your relations: if ever thou hadst been acquainted with God thyself, and tasted any sweetness in secret communion with him, couldst thou thus rob thy family of so great a blessing? Could you find such a treasure, and hide it from them you love so well? Have they not souls as precious in their bosoms as thy own? Art thou not willing they should find the way to heaven as well as thyself? Yea, art thou not God's feoffee in trust to take care of their souls as well as of their bodies? Dost thou owe no more to thy child and servant than to thy hog or horse? Their bodies are looked to, and wilt thou do no more for the other? How knowest thou but thy

thy holy example in the duties of God's worship among them, may leave such impressions on their hearts, as shall never be worn off to their dying day? Did you never hear any to the praise of God acknowledge, that the first turn towards heaven they ever had, was by living in such a godly family, where, with the worship of God, a savour and secret sense of the things of God did secretly steal into their hearts?

Certainly were our youth more acquainted with the duties of religion in private, the ministers work would be much facilitated in the public; by this, the consciences of many would be preserved tender, and so become more pliable to the counsels of the word preached; whereas now the devil hath a sad advantage (from the irreligion and atheism that is in most families) to harden their hearts to such a degree, as renders them almost impenetrable. It is no wonder to see that tree thrives not, which stands but little in the sun; and as little wonder to see them continue prophane and wicked, that but once in a week come under the beams of an ordinance, and then see nor hear any more of God till the Sabbath comes about again. Alas! how is it likely the spark should then be found alive, which had all along the week nothing to keep it from dying?

One well compareth the public ministry to the mason that builds the house, and family-governors to them that make the brick. Now if you (by neglecting your duty) bring clay instead of brick, you make the minister's work double. The truth is, the neglect of family-worship opens a wide flood-gate to let in a deluge of prophaneness into the church. Thou livest now without the worship of God in thy family, and haply in a few years from under thy own hive swarm many other families (children or servants), and it is most likely that they will follow thy copy; indeed it were a wonder, that they who are taught no better, should do otherwise; and so irreligion is like to spread apace.—When thy head is laid in the dust, thy prophaneness is not buried in the grave with thee; no, thou leavest others behind to keep it alive.

O how dismal is it to lay the foundation of a sin to many generations! The children unborn may rise up and curse such.—If I had heard my father pray, may the child say, in a dying hour, or had been led into the acquaintance of the worship of God by his example, then had not I lived like an heathen as I have done. Well, as you would not have your children and servants meet you in the other world with their mouths full of outcries and accusations; or if this (because it seems further off) dread you not, as you would not have them prove a plague and scourge to you in this world, let not your family-government be irreligious; it is just that God should suffer thy servant to be unfaithful

unfaithful to thee in thy estate, who art so to his soul; that thy children when old should forget their duty to thee, that didst bring them up like heathens in their youth, without learning them their duty to God.

CHAP. XLI.

To those Governors of Families that perform this Duty.

FOURTHLY, To you that have set up this duty in your families, a few words of counsel for the more holy management thereof.

SECT. I.—First, Think it not enough to prove thee a saint that thou prayest in thy family.

You may set up the worship of God in your house, and not enthrone God in your hearts. God forbid that you should bless yourselves in this, and dub yourselves saints because of this; alas, you are not as yet got so far as some hypocrites have gone. The duty is good, but the outward performance of it doth not demonstrate any to be so. There are many turnings to hell nearer heaven than this. From the act therefore look to the end thou proposest to thyself in it. He is a foolish archer, that shoots his arrow before he hath taken his aim aright.

The question God asks is, *Dost thou at all pray to me, even to me?* Thou mayest possibly affect others with thy praying, yea, be instrumental to break their hearts by thy confessions, and refresh their spirits by the sweet expressions that flow from thee, thyself playing the hyprocrite all the while. It behoves thee therefore to consider, what is the weight and spring which sets this duty a-going in thy family; is it not to gain an opinion of being religious in other's thoughts? If so, thou playest at small game; indeed religion were a sorry thing, if this were all to be got by it. When thou hast obtained this end, it will not ease thee of one stitch of conscience, nor quench one spark in hell's tormenting fire for thee; but if this be it thou huntest after, it is a question whether thou believest there be such a place or no.

These few principles, well girded by faith about the loins of thy mind, that there is a God, and he a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; that heaven is prepared for the sincere, and hell gapes for the hypocrite, would be enough to set thy heart right in the duty. Though the traveller minds not much his way where he apprehends no danger; yet when he comes to pass over a narrow bridge, where a wry step may hazard his life by

by falling into a deep river that runs on each hand, he will surely watch his eye that is to guide his foot. This is thy case: Prayer is a solemn work, as any thou canst go about in thy whole life-time; a bye end in this may hazard thy soul as much, as a wry look thy body in the other. We need do no more to lose our souls, than to seek ourselves.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Take heed thou blottest not thy holy duties with an unholy life.

If thou meanest to foul thy hands with sin's black work in the day, why dost thou wash them in the morning with prayer? It is to no purpose to begin with God, and to keep the devil company all the day after; religious order in thy house, and a disordered conversation ill agree. O! do not render the worship of God base to the thoughts of thy servants and family. Those that like the wine, will yet nauseate it when brought in a cup that is nasty and unclean.

The duties of God's worship command a reverence even from those that are carnal, but if performed by those that are loose and scandalous, they grow fulsome. Eli's sons made the people loathe the Lord's sacrifices. By thy religious duty thou settest a fair copy, O do not write it in sinking paper. It is but a while thou art seen upon thy knees, and a little seeming zeal at thy devotion will not gild over a whole day's sinful miscarriage, spent in passion, idleness, riot, or any other unholy course. It is said, that *Christ preached with power and authority, not as the scribes*, Mat. vii. 39. Not but they had authority to preach, for *they sat in Moses' chair;* but because they lost that reverence, by not walking suitably to their doctrine, which their place and work would have given them in the consciences of their hearers. *They said, and did not*, and thereby rendered their doctrine ineffectual. If thou wouldst pray with authority and power, enforce thy duties with purity of life.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Preserve peace and unity in thy family.

A brawling family cannot be a praying family. The apostle exhorteth husband and wife to love and unity, *lest their prayers be hindered*, 1 Pet. iii. 3. Contentions in a family both hinder the spirit of prayer, and also the answer to our prayers.

1. They hinder the spirit of prayer; the spirit of God is a spirit of peace and love, and therefore delights not to breathe in a troubled air; the ready way to send him going, is to brawl and chide. *Grieve not the holy spirit of God*, saith the apostle, Eph. iv. 30. and that we may hear what is his counsel, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* When these are gone, then, and not before, look for his sweet company. You may

as

as well dwell comfortably together with your house on fire, as pray so together, when you in the house are on fire.

2. Contentions hinder the answer to our prayers; if we pray in anger, God cannot be pleased. *The wrath of man fulfils not the righteousness of God.* A loud wind beats down the smoke: our prayers are compared to incense; but they will never ascend to heaven till this storm be laid: go to pray in this plight, and God will bid you come when you are better agreed. The spirit will not help in such prayers, and if the spirit hath no hand in the inditing, Christ will have no hand in presenting the prayer; and if Christ present it not, to be sure the Father will not receive it, for *through him we have an access by one spirit unto the Father*, Eph. ii. 18.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, Be very choice whom thou makest a member of thy family.

Get, if thou canst, such under thy roof as may give a lift with thee in thy family worship. Though it be not thy sin to pray with a wicked wife and servant, yet it is thy sin to make choice of such for thy relations, (if otherwise thou canst help it), yet alas, how little is this considered! Though the blessing and comfort of the family be deeply concerned therein; a little beauty, honour, or pelf, do too often blind the eyes, and bribe the judgments of those, who we may hope to be themselves gracious, that they can yoke themselves with such as are very unmeet to draw with them in heaven-way and work; David knew that Michael came of a bad stock, but haply hoped to bring her over to comply with him in the service of God; and we see what a grievous cross she proved to him.

Solomon tells us of some that *trouble their own house*, Prov. xv. 27. He that for carnal respects takes a wicked wife into his bosom, or servant into his family, is the man that is sure to do this; haply when he would pray and praise God, his wife like Job's will bid him curse; when he is at duty, she will despise him in her heart, and make a mock of his zeal, as Michael did of David's. And so they, who for some natural abilities they see in a servant, venture on him, though wicked and ungodly, pay dearly for it; such often bring with them that plague of profaneness which infects the rest; so that what they earn their masters with their hands, they rob them of with their sins, which brings the curse of God to their family. Who, that is wise, would build a house with timber that is on fire? If the servant thou entertainest be wicked, fire is in him that will endanger thy house.—Make it therefore thy care to plant a godly family. This was David's resolution, haply he saw the evil of his former choice, *Mine eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*

me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell in my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight, Psal. ci. 6, 7.—Then the music will be sweet in thy family duties, when thou canst get a concert into thy house; such whose souls are in tune for those holy services thou art to join with them in.

SECT. V.—Fifthly, Keep a diary of thy family sins and mercies, that so neither the one may escape thy confession and humiliation, nor the other thy grateful recognition.

If this were observed, we should not come with such jejune and barren hearts to the work, as now, alas, most do. Take some time to affect thy heart with both these: the brokenness of thy heart who prayest, will conduce much towards the same disposition in those that join with thee; nothing melts metal sooner than to pour that on it which is melted: The drowsy speaker often prays the rest asleep that join with him. Take heed therefore of formality; that is the canker which eats out the very heart of religious duties. Remember thou art to thy family what the minister is to the public assembly; as the deadness of his heart in prayer and preaching hath a bad operation upon his people to make them like himself, so hath thine on thy family. Thou dost not only suffer a personal loss thyself, but wrongest the rest of thy company: As when thou wastest thy estate, thy wife, children, servants, and all fare the worse, and must pinch for it; so when thou choakest up thy heart with inordinate cares of the world, or any other way indisposest thyself by thy sinful walking for the duty of prayer, thy whole family goes by the loss with thee.

SECT. VI.—Sixthly, Observe the fittest seasons for duty in thy family, when with most freedom and least disturbance it may be performed.

In the morning, take the opportunity, before a throng of worldly business crowds in upon thee. In some families I have observed, where they are in great employments, that if duty be delayed till some worldly occasions be dispatched; then either it hath been shut out, or shut up in such straits of time, that the slighty slovenly manner of performing it hath proved little better than the total neglect.

To prevent this disorder, it is best to forestall the world's market, betimes in the morning to set upon the duty, and offer up to God the first-fruits of the day, before our thoughts meet with a diversion. We read, Exod. xvi. 21. that the *Israelites gathered their manna early in the morning*, and *when the sun waxed hot it melted*. I would wish, especially, such who have a multiplicity of worldly occasions, to take their time for communion with God early, while their thoughts are more compact, before they are hot in their worldly business, lest they then find their thoughts

thoughts so diffused and scattered among other business, as will not easily be gathered into a close and united attendance upon God in the duty.

Again, when night comes, delay not the work till ye are more fit to go to your pillow than to your cushion, to sleep than to pray. If the eye sleep, the soul cannot well wake. Especially consider your servants that labour hard in the day; O do not expose them to the temptation of drowsy prayers; if our hearts took delight in the work, we would plot and contrive which would be the best time for communion with God, even as lovers do how and when they may most privately meet together.

CHAP. XLII.

Of Public Prayer; that God requires it, and why?

SECONDLY, The second kind of social or joint prayer is public; that which is made in and by the church assembled together for the worship of God. In handling of which I shall endeavour these five things:

First, To shew, That God requires a public worship of his people.

Secondly, That prayer is a part of this public worship he commands.

Thirdly, Why God requires a public worship, and in particular, public prayer.

Fourthly, I shall resolve a question or two concerning public prayer.

Fifthly, and Lastly, I shall make some applicatory improvement of this head.

SECT. I.—1. For the first, That God requires a public worship of his people.

This word *cultus*, or worship in general, is *obsequium alicui præstitum juxta excellentiam ejus;* worship is that honour and service which we give to any one according to his excellency; and it is threefold, civil, moral, or divine. Civil worship is the due honour and service we pay to a person in place and power over us, as prince, father, or master. Moral, is that due reverence and respect which we pay to a person that hath any excellency of virtue or place, without authority over us. Thus we give honour and veneration both to the saints living on earth with us, and to the angels and saints in heaven. Religious or divine worship, is the honour and service we give to that being, who we

we believe is the author of our beings, and fountain of our happiness. Now, this being is God, and he only. To him, therefore, and him alone, is religious worship due: Deut. vi. 13, 14. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name; ye shall not go after other gods.*

This religious worship of the true God comes under divers distinctions; inward and outward, private and public. The public worship of God is the present subject of our discourse, that I mean, which the congregation performs to him in their religious assemblies, called, Psal. lxxxix. 5. *the congregation of saints;* and, ver. 9. *the assembly of saints.* The church of God on earth began in a family, and so did the worship of God: but when the number increased, the worship of God also became more public, Gen. iv. 26. *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*, that is, they began publicly, saith Mercer. Seth and other of the religious seed began to have their holy assemblies for the service of God. Willet *in locum.*

It is observable, how God, at the promulgation of the law on Sinai, when he first formed the Israelites into a polity, took special care for erecting a public worship to his name. That was the *day of their espousals*, Jer. ii. 2. and then he instituted a solemn form of public worship, with exact rules how it should be performed. The same care took our Lord Jesus for his gospel-church, in appointing both church ordinances, and officers to dispense the same.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Prayer is part of that religious worship, which the church is to perform to God in her public assemblies; yea, a principal part, put therefore frequently for the whole, Zech. viii. 21, 22.

The inhabitants of one city shall go unto another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts. I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord of Hosts. It is a prophecy, how believers in gospel-times should zealously provoke one another to go to the assemblies of the church, (of which Jerusalem was a type), there to pray and worship God together. *It is written*, saith our Saviour, *my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer*, Mark xi. 17. This was partially performed, when converts in the apostles' days did flock to Jerusalem, there to worship God. *Sed perfecte impletum est illud in Christi Ecclesia ex omnibus gentibus collecta, &c.* It is more fully accomplished in the church of Christ, gathered out of all nations, that should keep up the worship of God in her assemblies.

Saint Luke forgets not to mention this of prayer, amongst the other duties and offices of primitive Christians in their assemblies,

blies, Acts ii. 42. *They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* By continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, Mr. Perkins understands their attendance on the apostles' sermons; by fellowship, understands their contributions to the poor, which were gathered at their assemblies, a work very fit for that place, *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, Heb. xiii.; by breaking of bread, the celebration of the Lord's supper; and by prayers, those which they put up together in communion at their church meetings. Nor is this of prayer crowded last, because the least duty of the company; but rather, because it hath a necessary influence into them all; the word, and sacraments, which God useth to sanctify his people by, are themselves sanctified to us by prayer.

And Saint Paul, when he hath shewn, 1 Tim. i. what doctrine ministers are to preach in the church, he, in the second chapter, directs them what to insist chiefly on in their public prayer: *I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* This the church of Christ ever esteemed a principal part of their public worship. Tertullian, speaking of the assemblies of the church, saith, *Coimus in cœtum & congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiamus orantes; hæc vis Deo grata est.* We meet in the congregation, that we may by our fervent prayers environ God, as an army doth a castle; and this holy force with which we assault heaven pleaseth him.

I proceed to the third head, to give some account why God requires a public worship, or a joint service of his people in communion together, and why this particular duty of prayer.

SECT. III.—First, As a free and open acknowledgment of their dependence on, and allegiance to God.

It is most reasonable we should own the God we serve, even in the face of the world, and not like Nicodemites carry our religion in a dark lanthorn. He is unworthy of his master's service, that is ashamed to wear his livery, and follow him in the street with it on his back. *This day*, saith Moses to Israel, *thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people*, Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. Even heathens understand thus much, that they owe a free profession and public service to the God they vouch; *All people walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*, Micah iv. 5.

Now,

Now, by walking in the name of God, they mean, they will invocate his name, and vouch him by a public worship, as you may see by the first and second verses of that chapter. And this is a gospel prophecy concerning the last days; where, by the way, we may take notice of the folly and pride of those, that cast off public ordinances and private also, from a pretence of their high attainments, leaving these duties of religion as strings for those that are yet children to be led by. This is horrible pride and ignorance, to have such an high opinion of themselves. But were they so perfect as they falsely imagine themselves, and needed not any further teaching, yet ought they not still to vouch God by worshipping of him?

The ground from which divine worship becomes due to God is, his own infinite perfections, and our dependence on him as the author of beings, and fountain of our bliss. Hence it is, that angels and saints in heaven worship him, though in a way suitable to their glorified state. Some ordinances indeed fitted to the church militant on earth shall there cease; but a worship remains, yea, it is their constant employment. Saints on earth serve God always, but cannot always worship, therefore they have stated times appointed them.

Now to cast off the worship of God, is to renounce God himself, and communion with his church, both on earth and in heaven, Isa. lxv. 11. *Ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain;* they did not give him his public worship, and he interprets this as a casting him off from being their God. Sometimes, I confess, the church doors are shut by persecutors, and when this flood is up, the ways to Zion mourn; yet then we are to lament after the Lord and his ark. Holy David was no stranger to private devotions, yet could not but bewail his banishment from the public, *My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary*, Psal. lxiii. 2, 3.

Secondly, To preserve love and unity in the church.

God is one, and dearly loves oneness and unity among his people. This reason he gives why he would have the curtains of the tabernacle coupled together, *That it might be one tabernacle*, Exod. xxxvi. 13. 18. The fastening of these curtains so lovingly together for this end, that the tent might be one, signified the knitting and clasping together of the saints in love. Now, tho' this be effected principally by the inward operation of the holy spirit upon their hearts, for he alone can knit souls, and knead them into one lump; yet he useth their joint communion in ordinances as a happy means through which he may convey and derive his grace that fastens them in love together. These are the ligaments that tie one member to another in this mystical

body. And do we not see that Christians, like members of the natural body, take care for and sympathize with one another, so long as they are united in one communion; but when these ligaments are cut, communion in worship is broke; then we see one member drops from another, and little care for or love to each other, is to be found among them. The apostle saw good reason to join both these in one exhortation, Heb. x. 24, 25. *Let us consider one another to provoke to love, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together;* as if he had said, If you cannot agree to worship God one with another, you will have little love one for another. When the Jews' *staff of beauty* was cut asunder, the *staff of bands* did not last long unbroken, Zech. xi. 10.

Religion hath its name *a religando*, it is a strong binder; break the beautified order of church communion, and a people will soon fall all to pieces. It is observable, how endearing conversation and communion is, in things of an inferior nature—scholars that go to school together, those that board in the same house, *collactanei*, that suck the same milk, twins that lie together in the same belly, they have a mutual endearment of affection each to another. How influential then must church-communion needs be, where all these meet? when they shall consider they go to the same public school of the ministry, sit at the same table of the sacrament, suck the same breasts of ordinances, and lie together in the bosom, yea, womb of the same church.

This was admirably seen in the primitive Christians, who, by fellowship in ordinances, were inspired with such a wonderful love to one another, that they could hardly find their hearts in their own breasts: Acts ii. *All that believed were together, and continued in the temple with one accord, and, breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.* But when a breach was made in the church's communion, then love catched her cold, which grew upon Christians as divisions increased. Now one would think, the cause of our disease being so easily known, the cure should not be so hard as, alas, at this day we find it.

Thirdly, For the saints' safety and defence against their enemies.

Paul rejoiced at the order and stedfastness of the Collossian saints, 2 Col. v. Order is a military word, and denotes *cohortem ordine apte conglobatam*, an army compact, and cast into such a fit order, that every part is helpful to each other for its defence; and such an army are the saints, when they stand in communion together according to divine rule. Our blessed Saviour, when departing from earth to heaven, what course took he to leave his disciples in a defensive posture after he was gone? Doth he send them home to look every one to himself? No, but to Jerusalem, there

there to stand, as it were, in a body, by joint communion, Acts i. The drop is safe in the river, lost when severed from it; the soldier safe when marching with the army, but snapped when he straggles from it.

Cain, looking upon himself as an excommunicated person from the church of God, expected some great evil (as well he might) would befal him. Therefore, the gracious soul, meant by the spouse, is brought in asking, where the assembly of the faithful is, that, joining herself to it, she may be protected in a time of danger, Cant. i. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon? For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?*

Fourthly, Because of the great delight he takes in the joint prayers and praises of his people.

We need not detract from the excellency of private devotions, to magnify the public prayers of the church; both are necessary, and highly pleasing to God, yet it is no wrong to the private devotions of a particular saint, to give the precedency to the public prayers of the church. God himself tells us, Psal. lxxxvii. 2. *He loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.* No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs, were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church-choir, his saints' prayers in concert together.—A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house.

The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels and saints make but one concert. There is a wonderful prevalency in the joint prayers of his people.—When Peter was in prison, the church meets and prays him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of a whole city, which, may be, he would not at the request of a private subject, and yet love him well too. There is an especial promise to public prayer, Matt. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Non dicit ero, non enim tardat vel cunctatur, sed sum jam illic invenior præsens gratia & favore singulare, eo quod summopere me delectat hujusmodi concordia:* He doth not say, I will, for he makes no delay or demur upon the business: but I am there, let them come as soon as they will, present by my special favour and grace, because this concord in prayer highly pleaseth me. It is the gloss of Lucas Brugens upon the place.

CHAP. XLIII.

Two Questions about Public Prayer Answered.

FOURTHLY, I come to answer a question or two concerning public prayer.

SECT. 1.—*Quest* 1. The first question is, Whether it be lawful that the public prayers of the church be performed in a language not understood by the people?

Answ. All the offices of the church, and duties performed in its worship, are to be done unto edification: this is an apostolical canon.

Now none can be edified by what he understands not, and therefore it must needs be, as Beza calls the Popish Latin service, *Ludibrium Dei & hominis*, a mocking of God and man, to babble such prayers in the church which the people know not what they mean. *If I pray*, saith the apostle, *in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful*, 1 Cor. xiv. 4. he means, the congregation are not the wiser for his understanding the prayer he puts up, except he could make them understand it also. We can no more be edified by another's intellect, than be saved by another's faith.

When God intended to defeat that bold attempt of those sons of pride, who would needs build a tower that should vie with the heavens for height, he did no more but confound their language, that they might not understand one another's speech, and it was done, presently their work ceased: and as they could not build, so neither can he edify the people that understand not his speech in prayer. A dumb minister may serve the people's turn as well as he who, by his speech, is a barbarian to them; for the minister's voice is necessary in his public administrations, as Augustine saith, *Significandæ mentis suæ causa, non ut Deus sed ut homines audient*, &c. To signify his meaning, not that God may hear, for he hears those prayers which the tongue is not employed to express, but that the people may hear, and so join their votes with his to God.

As the minister is to pray for them, so they to pray with him, which they are to testify by their hearty Amen at the close: but this they cannot do, if we believe St. Paul: *How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say, Amen, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?* 1 Cor. xiv. 16. *The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth*, saith Solomon, Prov. xvi. 23. That is, he will not, as we say, suffer his tongue to run before his wit, but know what he shall speak, before he sends his tongue on his errand. And surely, above all this,

this, wisdom is to be shewn in our prayers, wherein we speak not to man, but God. To say amen to that prayer which we understand not, what is it but to offer the sacrifice of fools?

Holy matter in prayer is the incense to be offered, the tongue is the censer, but the affections of the devout soul bring the fire to the incense, before it can ascend as a sweet perfume into the nostrils of God. Now if the intellect want light to understand what the matter of the prayer is, the affections must either be cold, or wild; and wild-fire is unfit to offer up the incense of prayer with. It is not enough that the praying soul be touched with some devout affections, but that these affections be suitable to the matter of the prayer, yea, arise from the sense it hath thereof.

SECT. II.—*Quest.* 2. The second question is, Whether a set form of prayer be lawful to be used in the church?

If it be unlawful, it is because by the use of a set form in prayer, some command of God is transgressed; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Now it will trouble those who decry all set forms, how holy soever the matter of them be, to shew any command upon scripture-record that forbids the praying by a set form, or that disallows its use, either in express terms, or by necessary consequence.—It will be granted, yea must, that the scripture is a perfect rule in this particular duty of God's worship, as well as in other. But among all the precepts and rules in the book of God, we find none that commands we should pray by a conceived form, and not by a set form; we are commanded *who to pray to*, to God, and none other, Psal. xliv. 20. *In whose name we are to pray*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. Ephes. v. 20. We are bound up to the matter of our prayer, *what we are to ask*, 1 John v. 14. And lastly, in what manner we are to pray, we must pray *with understanding*, John iv. 22. 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Heb. xi. 6. *In faith*, James i. 6. Heb. xi. 4. with sincere *fervency*, Jer. xxix. 12. In a word, which comprehends all in one, we are to pray *in the spirit*. Ephes. vi. in the *Holy Ghost*, Jude ver. 20. Now he that can do all this, need not fear but he prays lawfully, and consequently acceptably.

And we must confess this may be done by one that prayeth with a set form, or else we must very boldly charge many eminent saints in scripture for praying unlawfully. Who dares say that Solomon praised God unlawfully, when he used the very form which David his father had penned? Or that Moses did not pray in the spirit, because he prayed in a constant form at the setting forward of the ark, and at its setting down again?

Thus you have seen what God hath prescribed to our praying acceptably; and if it had been of such dangerous consequence to

have prayed by a set form, as to make our prayers abominable, would God have omitted to warn his people of it, especially when he foresaw that his churches generally in their assemblies would make use of them, as they have done for thirteen or fourteen hundred years? But may we not rather, yea undoubtedly we ought to conclude, that, seeing the Lord in his word descends not to prescribe what the outward frame and order of our words in prayer should be, whether conceived *extempore*, or cast into a form before hand, (only gives general rules, that all things should be done decently, that we be not rash with our mouth, or our heart hasty to utter any thing before God, and such like, that are applicable to both), I say we should conclude, both are lawful and warrantable, the scripture having determined neither the one way nor the other: and therefore, to put religion in one, so as to condemn the other as unlawful, looks, as a learned holy pen hath it, too like superstition, seeing God himself hath laid no bond upon the conscience either way.

As for the excellency of conceived prayer, wherein the devout Christian, out of the abundance of his heart, pours out his requests to God, none but a prophane spirit dares open his mouth against it. But there is no way to magnify the excellency of that, but by vilifying and imputing sin to the other. Alas! the evil is not in a form, but in formality, and that is a disease that may be found in him that prays with a conceived prayer. A man may pray without a form, and yet not pray without formality. Tho' I confess, he that binds himself constantly to a set form, especially in his private addresses, seems to me to be more in danger of the two to fall under the power of that lazy distemper.

But to hasten the dispatch of this question, (for I intend not a full discourse of this point, but would top a few heads only, which you may find more largely insisted on in many worthy treatises on this subject), I would desire those that scruple the lawfulness of all set forms, to look wisely upon those set forms of blessing, prayers, and thanksgiving, that are upon scripture-record, and were used by the servants of God with his approbation, and then consider whether God would prescribe or accept what is unlawful?

The priests had a form of blessing the people, Numb. vi. 23. Moses used, as I hinted, a form of prayer at the remove of the ark, *Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee:* And when it was set down, another form, *Return, O Lord, unto the thousands of Israel*, Numb. x. 35. which very form was continued and used by David, Psal. lxviii. 1. Asaph and his brethren had set forms of thanksgiving given them to use in their public service, 1 Chron. xvi. 17. *On that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the*

the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. This was the first he appointed to be sung in the public service, the several parts whereof were afterwards much enlarged, as you may see by comparing the cv. Psalm with the former part of the song in the place fore-quoted, and Psalm cxvi. with the latter part of it. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon used the very form of words in praising God which his father had penned, 2 Chron. vii. 6. Good Hezekiah commands the Levites *to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David*, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. This holy man, no doubt, was able to have poured forth extemporary praises, as it is thought he did in that prayer which he on the sudden put up upon the occasion of that railing letter sent him, 2 Kings xix. 14. yet did not think it unlawful to use a form in this public administration. Yea, our blessed Saviour, an instance beyond all instances, both gave a form of prayer to his disciples, and himself disdained not to pray three several times, one after another, the very same form of words, Matt. xxvi. 44. *He left them, and went again and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* And that hymn which he sang with his disciples is conceived by the learned to be that portion of psalms which the Jews used at the celebration of the passover; see Beza and Gerhard Harmo, *in locum.*

CHAP. XLIV.

This Head of Public Prayer briefly improved.

FIFTHLY, I come now to the fifth thing propounded in prosecution of this head of public prayer, and that is applicatory.

SECT. I.—*Use* 1. First, This shews, what reason the people of God (wherever they live) have to pray for good magistrates, especially kings and princes.

Regna sunt hospitia Ecclesiæ; as the inn is to the traveller, so kingdoms are to the church in its pilgrimage here on earth.—As they are, such is its usage in the world, and entertainment that it finds. *Pray for kings*, saith the apostle, *and all in authority, that we may lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty*, 1 Tim. ii. 2. By godliness, he means in an especial manner the free profession of the truth, and public exercise of God's pure worship. No magistrate can hinder the saints living godly, as to the embracing of the truth in their hearts, and secret performance of prayer. Daniel would and could pray,

let Nebuchadnezzar do his worst. But princes carry the keys of the church-doors at their girdles, and can shut or open them.

When faithful magistrates sway the sceptre, then the ways to Zion are easy and open; when enemies to the ways and worship of God bear rule, then they mourn; church-doors are shut, and prison-doors opened to the servants of Christ: then the woman flies into the wilderness, and the church into private chambers, as we find in the apostles' days, when the church was met with the doors shut, to pray for Peter. O pray for kings and princes, for as they carry the keys of the church-doors, so God carries the key that opens the doors of their hearts at his pleasure.

SECT. II.—Secondly, It reproves those that turn their backs on the public worship: now they are of two sorts; the prophane atheist, and the scrupulous separatist.

1. The irreligious atheist, such who, out of a prophane spirit, turn their back on the public worship of God.

The Jews have a saying of one of their Rabbies much in their mouths, *Quisquis incolit civitatem in qua extat synagoga, & mihi non precatur, is est qui merito dicitur vicinus malus;* He that dwells in a city where there is a synagogue, and comes not to prayers there, he is the person that deserves the name of a bad neighbour.

How many bad neighbours, do we, alas, live among, who are seldom seen in the public assembly from one end of the year to the other? Many live as if they had rent the bond that was sealed at their baptism, and renounced all homage to their maker, and would tell the world they owed him no worship. Worse brutes these are than the hog in their stye, or horse in their stable. They were made for our use, and accordingly serve us; man was intended for the service of his maker, a creature made for religion, by which some would define and distinguish human nature from that of brutes, rather than by his rational faculty; indeed in some brutes there is a sagacity, that looks something like man's discoursive faculty; but religion is a thing their nature is wholly incapable of, and therefore nothing makes man so truly a brute as irreligion.

The Jewish Talmud propounds this question, Why God made man *vespera sabbathi?* and gives this as one reason, *Ut protinus intraret in præceptum;* that is, God made man on the evening just before the Sabbath, that he might forthwith enter upon the observation of the command to sanctify the Sabbath, and begin his life, as it were, with the worship of God, which was the chief end why it was given him. May we not therefore wonder at the patience of God in suffering these ungodly wretches to live, that, by casting this horrid contempt upon his worship, walk contrary to the very end of their creation? If the bells which call us to the

the worship of God, were to give them notice of a wrestling, foot-ball, or drunken wake, O how soon should we have them flock together! but prayers and sermons they care not for.— What shall we impute this irreligion and atheism of multitudes among us to? Surely it proceeds from a criminous conscience.

It is said of Cain, *He went out from the presence of the Lord*, Gen. iv. 16.; that is, say some interpreters, from that place where God had his church and worship, there God is especially present. Guilt indeed makes men afraid of God. This makes them do what they can to wear off the thoughts of a deity, that are so troublesome to their flagitious consciences; now to do this, they have no other way than to shun those duties which will bring God and their sins to their remembrance. Herod was soon persuaded to cut off that head, whose tongue was so bold as to tell him of his faults: and prophane hearts are easily drawn to cast off those duties, which will gall and rub hard upon their sore consciences. But that man is in a miserable case, that knows no way to get ease, but by throwing away the plaister that must heal his wound. Ah, poor wretches! this will not serve your turn. What though the prisoner stops his ears, and will not hear the judge pronounce the sentence against him, will that save him from the gallows? Surely no, but rather procure his being sent thither the sooner, for his contempt of the court, who had he carried himself better, and humbly begged his life at the judge's hand, might possibly have got the sentence reversed.

Whether sinners will hear the word or no, come to his worship or no, God will proceed in his work. Flouting against God, and turning thy back on his worship, is not the way to prevent, but hasten divine vengeance. How much better were it to make thy humble supplication to thy judge, and wait at the posts of wisdom. While men, though bad, wait on ordinances, there is hope, for they are under the means; but when they cast them off, then their ruin hastens.

2. The scrupulous separatist, such who do not absent from the public worship, out of a prophane atheistical spirit, as the former, but from some scruples, whether they may lawfully be present at the prayers there put up, because there are some mal-administrations in the performance of it, or at least which they think to be such; at these they are distasted, and so withdraw: may be it is because the duty of prayer is performed with a set form, which they conceive unlawful. This I shall wave, having spoken already to it. Or may be it is not a form, but some passages used in the form that offends them, and therefore they dare not be present. So that the question will be,

Quest. Whether it be lawful to be present at that service, or those

those prayers in the congregation, that have something faulty in them?

Ans. To the answering of this question, we must first distinguish of faults; all are not of a size: there are faults in the matter, and faults in the form and method of a prayer; and faults in the matter may be either fundamental, or of a less nature, such as are not fundamental, nor bordering thereupon; and those less faults may be generally dispersed through the prayer, that it is soured throughout with them, or only in some particular passages.

Secondly, We must distinguish between approving of the faults, defects, and corruptions that are in a prayer, and being present at the service of God, where some things are done faultily. Now I answer, that it is lawful for a Christian to be present at those prayers, wherein some things may be supposed to be faulty for outward form, yea, and also in matter, in things not fundamental, nor bordering thereupon, and these not dispersed through the whole body of the prayers, but in some passages only. We may be present, where God is present by his grace and favour. We may follow the Lamb safely wherever he goes.

Now God doth not, for corruptions of doctrine, that are remote from the foundation, or of worship, in things ritual and of an inferior nature, cast off a church, and withdraw his presence from it; neither ought we. Indeed, if the foundation of doctrine be destroyed, and the worship become idolatrous; in that case, God goes before us, and calls all the faithful after him to come out from the communion of such a church. But where corruptions in a church are of the former nature, and such laws be not imposed by the church in their communion with it, as bring a necessity of approving things unlawful, the sin is not in holding communion with it, but in withdrawing from it, and that no little one neither. Many things must be tolerated, for maintaining peace and unity, and enjoying the worship of God, when it is not in our power to redress them.

Neither doth our presence at the ordinance carry interpretatively a consent with it of all that is there done. It is one thing to tolerate, and another to approve. Who ever said, that all who are present in an assembly, by it shew their consent to every impertinent phrase in the minister's prayer, corrupt gloss, or false interpretation he makes of any text quoted in his sermon? If this were true, our Saviour led the people into a snare, when he bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees' doctrine, yet bade them hear them preach, Matt. xxiii. 3.

SECT. III.—*Use* 3. Thirdly, Of exhortation.

First, Make conscience of joining with the church in her public worship.

Do

Do not think thou art left at thy liberty whether thou wilt or not, but bind it upon thy conscience as a duty, for so indeed it is. You think it is the minister's duty to dispense ordinances, surely then it is your duty to attend on them. He might as well pray for you at home, as come to church, and not find his people there. Is there a woe to him if he doth not provide food for your souls, and none for you if you come not to partake of it? how can you reasonably think so? And when you come, think not you are time enough there, if you get to the sermon, though you miss the prayers, which should prepare you for the word, and sanctify the word to you. It is not the way to profit by one ordinance, to neglect another. The minister may preach, but God must teach thee to profit. If God opens not thy understanding to conceive of, and thy heart to conceive by, the word thou hearest, no fruit will come of it. Now prayer is the key to open God's heart, as his spirit is the key to open thine.

Secondly, Take heed how thou comest to, and behavest thyself, as in other parts of the public worship, so especially in prayer.

1. How thou comest to public worship; take heed thou comest not in thy filthiness; I mean, that thou regard not iniquity in thy heart. Wash, and then pray; so David resolves, *I will wash my hands in innocency, and so compass thine altar*, alluding to the priests that went to the laver before they approached with their sacrifice to the altar, Exod. xl. It was counted a great presumption in one, that he durst come near his prince with a stinking breath; O what a bold act then is it to draw near to the great God with any sin upon thee! this is sure to make thy breath in prayer stink, and render thee for it abominable to him.

2. How thou behavest thyself in thy duty.

Be sure it be with a holy reverence.

First, With an inward reverence. God is called the *fear* of his people, because he is reverenced by them in their approaches to him. *Fear*, it is put for the whole worship of God, because no part of it is to be done without a holy trembling; this, as the quaver to the music, gives a grace and acceptableness both to our prayers and praises also; *Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling*. Now to fill thee with awful thoughts of God, labour to set up a right notion of God in thy mind, as infinitely glorious in holiness, majesty, and power. Irreverence is the product of low thoughts we have of a person, which makes it impossible that an ignorant soul should truly reverence God (how humble soever his outward posture is), because he knows not what God is. A prince in a disguise is not known, and therefore not entertained where he comes, as when he appears in his royal majesty. The saints used to awe their hearts into a reverence of God

God in prayer, by revolving his titles of majesty in their thoughts, Psal lxxxix. 6.

Secondly, Outward reverence. God is a spirit, yet will have the reverence of our body as well as spirit, for both are his; and especially in public. A prince would not like a rude behaviour from his servant in his bed-chamber, where none besides himself is witness to it; but much less will he bear it in his presence-chamber, as he sits on his throne, before many of his subjects. Now the fittest gesture of body in public prayer to express our reverence, is kneeling. *Come, let us worship, fall down, and kneel before the Lord*, Psalm xcv. 6. So Paul, taking his leave of the elders of Ephesus, kneeled and prayed with them all, Acts xx. 36. And all the Christians at Tyrus accompanying Paul to the ship, with their wives and children, *kneeled down on the shore and prayed*, Acts xxi. Where that cannot be done, they should stand (if debility of nature hinder not).

As for sitting, we do not find it commended in scripture, as a praying posture; neither have the churches of Christ judged it so: *Sedentem orare extra disciplinam est*, saith Tertullian; to pray sitting, is not according to the church's order: as for that, 2 Sam. vii. 18. David *sat before the Lord*; it may be read, he abode or stayed before the Lord: so the word in other places is taken; as, Gen. xxvii. 44. Lev. xliv. 8. 1 Sam. i. 22.

Thirdly, Attention and intention of mind, that they may go along with the minister by their devout affections, and witness their consent to the prayers put up, with their hearty Amen at the end of them, 1 Chron. xvi. 36. Neh. viii. 6. 1 Cor. xiv. 16. or else indeed they are as a broken string in a concert, that speaks not with the rest, and thereby discomposeth the harmony.

CHAP. XLV.

Of Extraordinary Prayer, its Nature, and by whom to be performed.

THE last sort of prayer (as to the manner of performing it) is *Extraordinary Prayer*; for the dispatch of which, I shall endeavour to answer these five questions.

First, What *Extraordinary Prayer* is?

Secondly, By whom it is to be performed.

Thirdly, What are the special seasons wherein we are to take it up?

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Why *Extraordinary Prayer* is superadded to *Ordinary*.

Fifthly, What counsel or direction may be given for the acceptable and successful performance of this duty?

Quest. 1. What is *Extraordinary Prayer?*

SECT. I.—*Answ.* Prayer may be called extraordinary in a double respect.

First, In regard of the time set apart for the performance of it; then it is extraordinary, when some more than ordinary portion of time is set apart and devoted to this work. Thus we find Jacob wrestling till break of day, Gen. xxxii. and Joshua with the elders of Israel till even-tide; the one probably spending the night, the other the day in this duty. And Israel (in their war with Benjamin) *wept, and sat that day before the Lord till even*, Judg. xx. We find Daniel many days together in prayer, Dan. x. 12.

Secondly, In regard of its adjunct. Then prayer is extraordinary when fasting is joined to the duty of prayer: now fasting is a religious abstinence, whereby we forbear the use of all earthly comforts in the time set apart for this duty (so far as necessity and decency will permit) the more to afflict our souls, and enforce our prayers: as,

First, A forbearing of food, whether meat or drink, Esth. iv. 16. Jonah iii. 7. from this, the whole action is called a fast, which imports not a sober use of food, for this we are at all times bound to observe, but a total abstinence, if necessity of nature through some debility and infirmity doth not require otherwise; for in this case, the less duty must yield to the greater: the end of fasting being to help us in prayer, which it doth not when nature faints under it; for the soul cannot fly, if the wings of our bodily spirits flag.

Secondly, All costly apparel, and ornaments of the body; gaudy rich clothes on a fast-day, do no better than a light trimming on a mourning suit, Exod. xxxiii. 4. *They mourned, and no man put on his ornaments;* and this was by God's own command, ver. 4. *For the Lord had said to Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, that they put off their ornaments.* In a word, all carnal mirth, music, perfumes, and whatever might recreate and delight the senses, are to be forborn upon this extraordinary occasion; see Dan. vi. 18. and x. 2, 3. For though abstinence from food, with the other severities imposed on the outward man, be not in themselves acts of worship, nor intrinsical to the nature of prayer, yet are they required in the extraordinary performance of this duty, by way of adjuvancy to it, and that they have a reference to spiritual ends.

1. By this abstinence, we acknowledge our unworthiness to enjoy

enjoy such comforts, and that God may justly take from us, what for a time we voluntarily deny ourselves of.

2. We express by our outward abstinence and fasting, the strength and vehemency of those inward affections which are to be exerted in extraordinary prayer. Men use to signify the violent passions of their soul, by forbearing the repast and delights of the body. Is it a passion of grief one is oppressed with? you will see him oft forsake his food; thus David, Psalm cii. 4. *My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.* Is it fear that possesseth the heart, with the apprehension of some great danger impending and approaching? you will have such a one refuse his wonted repast; so the mariners did in the sea-storm, Acts xxvii. Is it anger that vexeth a man? Ahab was deep in his passion upon the denial of Naboth's vineyard, and he throws himself on his bed, and will not eat, 1 Kings xxi. Is it a desire of compassing any great design that the head and heart is taken up and transported with? such a one will not allow himself time for his meal; *Cursed be he*, saith Saul, *that eateth any bread till evening, that I may be avenged of mine enemies*, 1 Sam. xiv. 24. We find the smith in the prophet so earnest at his idolatrous work, that he pincheth himself with hunger; and he will not eat though his strength faileth, nor drink though he be ready to faint, Isa. xliv. 12.

Now in extraordinary prayer, the Christian is to have all these affections, in a spiritual and holy manner, wound up to the highest key possible; he is to have a deep sorrow for sin, fear and trembling at the judgments of God feared to come for them, an holy anger and indignation against sin, with a vehement desire to be revenged on it for the dishonour it hath cast upon God; and, in a word, a longing desire to make his peace with God, and recover his favour, which sin hath unhappily deprived him of. Now, because the excess of natural passions discovers itself this way, even to afflict their very bodies, and makes them deny themselves that which nature most craves; therefore God will have his people in their extraordinary humiliations do the same, that nature may not put grace to shame.

3. By this abstinence, especially from food, we tame and subdue our wanton flesh, and so come to have a greater advantage for mortifying those sensual lusts, that receive the fuel which feeds and enflames them from the flesh. A full body is a mellow soil for such lusts to grow rank in. *Cum carne nutriuntur vitia carnis;* the lusts of the flesh are nourished when the body is pampered. If the body be kept high, carnal lusts will not easily be kept low. What else made Paul to beat down his body by fasting and watching, in which he was often? but that he might have the fuller blow at those lusts that received strength from it.

Nostrum

Nostrum est lasciviens jumentum frænis mediæ subjugare, ut sessorem spiritum sanctum moderato & composito portet incessu, Hieronimus, epist. 9. Indeed a pampered horse is most like to cast his rider: and the holy spirit using the body as well as the soul in the work, this bridle of fasting is of excellent use to curb it.

4. This abstinence from food is required to sharpen our spirits, and enliven the powers of the soul in this duty, which are pressed down and thickened, as I may so say, with the charge of the stomach. A full body makes a heavy eye, and drowsy spirits, and what can then be expected but yawning prayers, especially when we are to continue longer than ordinary at the work?

SECT. II.—*Quest.* 2. Who are they that are called to the practice of this duty of extraordinary prayer?

Answ. The command comprehends all that by age are enabled to understand the nature of this duty, when any extraordinary occasion occurs for the performance of the same.

We find it required of a church and nation. It is the magistrate's duty, when there is a national cause, to call his subjects to the public practice of this duty, Joel ii. 15. Neh. ix. 1. and he that refuseth his call thereunto, makes himself an offender both to God and man, Lev. xxiii. 29. It reacheth to private families; Esther and her maidens kept a religious fast together, Esth. iv. 16. Yea, it is a duty bound upon single persons, and reacheth to the secret closet, Matt. vi. 16. *But thou when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret.* The circumstances of the place shew, it is meant of a secret fast in the closet. We have them all together in one place, Zech. xii. 12. *The land shall mourn*, there is a national fast; *Every family apart, the house of David apart, and the house of Nathan apart*, &c. There is domestical; *and their wives apart;* there is a personal secret fast in the closet.

Object. But is not this extraordinary prayer and fasting too austere and rigid a duty for gospel times? Where doth Christ command his people in gospel times to macerate their bodies with such severities as these? Joy and praise better become the freedom and liberty of the gospel.

Answ. Such wild stuff hath been invented by some in our late loose times. These are a new sort of saints, which the world hath hardly been acquainted with before these unhappy days of ours; they would be in heaven before their time, and leave no tears upon their cheeks for Christ at death to wipe away. If any of these could live without sin and suffering, they would have some colour for their plea; though even then, being yet in the body, they should owe those tears to their brethren, which they need not

not drop for themselves. The apostle, I am sure, bids us *weep with those that weep, and mourn with those that mourn.* Thus did Nehemiah fast for his afflicted brethren in Jerusalem, when his own affairs were prosperous enough (being surrounded with the beams of the Persian emperor's favour). But there are none in mortal flesh free from sin, or exempted from sorrow; and therefore a mourning habit may sometimes become the best of saints on earth. *They that wear soft clothing are in king's houses*, Matt. xi. 8. Glorified saints who dwell in the king of heaven's court, are always clad with joy; but this on earth is the saint's holiday suit; as he hath now and then his rejoicing days, so he wants not his days for mourning.

The days will come, saith our Saviour, of his disciples, *when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast*, Matt. ix. 15. and surely they lived in gospel times. If these merry professors had been by Paul, to see how he beat down his body, and chastised himself with fasting, they surely would have chid him for his pains, and thought him ignorant of his Christian liberty. The worst I wish these poor deluded souls is, that they who are so much for joy here, meet with no mourning in another world. It is but an ill sign, when men quarrel with a duty for its strictness, and slip the yoke off their necks because the wanton flesh saith it is uneasy. These are like Ephraim, whom the prophet compares to an heifer *that loveth to tread the corn*, but not to plough, for that is hard hungry work. A thanksgiving day, that brings a feast with it, this they like, and are content it should pass for a gospel-duty; but a day of prayer and fasting, wherein they are to pinch their carcase a little, this will not go down. But is there is no feast except that which goes down the throat, and fills the belly? Certainly this blessed duty deserves not the ill name it hath given unto it by men of sensual spirits. It is indeed to carnal wretches a heavy yoke, a tedious work. As the milch kine that carried the ark went bellowing for their calves that were taken from them, so do these in a fast-day, after their employments and enjoyments of the world, from which they are for that time restrained. Alas! poor creatures, as the ark was nothing but a burden to the kine, so the duty is no other to them.

But the true saint, that knows what ease his poor heart feels, in exonerating his conscience by humble confession of sin, what sweet satisfaction his soul meets with in communion with God, and what faith and inward peace he carries away with him from the duty, will give you another character of this ordinance than so; he will tell you he had rather be fasting with God, than feasting at a king's table. What saint had not rather be fasting on the mount with Moses, than eating and playing with the carnal Israelites

Israelites below the hill? Who would not miss a meal for his body, to satiate his soul with those delights that the presence of God, in such an ordinance, affords? Who would not take pleasure in mourning and weeping for sin, to have the tears he sheds dried up with kisses from his Saviour's mouth? It is indeed to him that stands sucking of the bush (I mean the external part of the duty) a dry sapless service, but to him that is taken into the wine-cellar, and there drinks full draughts of the love of God, it is a most sweet soul-ravishing ordinance. The lower exterior part of the duty, like the bottom of Jacob's ladder, stands on the earth, and leaves the creature also on the earth, where it found him; for bodily exercise profits little. But the top and spiritual part of it reacheth to heaven, and mounts the gracious soul thither, even unto bosom-communion with God.

There is as much difference between a saint, and a hypocrite, or carnal soul, in this duty, as there is between a thief locked up with his keeper in a prison, and a scholar locking himself in his study, to read some book that he is greatly delighted with; to the one it is a grievous burden, to the other an incomparable pleasure.

CHAP. XLVI.

The Seasons for Extraordinary Prayer.

Quest. 3. WHAT are those special seasons wherein the Christian is to take up the practice of this duty of extraordinary prayer?

Answ. I answer, first, in general, any extraordinary occasion, as it emergeth in the course of providence in the Christian's life.

This kind of prayer is not of constant use, as ordinary prayer is; this is food, that physic; and it were absurd to be taking physic all the year long. Which shews the folly of the papists in their fasts, which are holden at set times, whether affairs be prosperous or not prosperous, ordinary or extraordinary. I would not be thought here to speak against set fasts: we have had our monthly fasts; but the extraordinary cause for which they were appointed continued. But to instance in a few special seasons, wherein the Christian hath a fit occasion to make use of this extraordinary duty.

SECT. I.—First, When he is to set upon any more than an ordinary enterprise, wherein he may meet with great difficulty

or danger, and the issue whereof will be a great mercy or affliction.

Now is a fit season to take up this extraordinary duty, as an excellent means whereby all mountains of intervening difficulties may be levelled, and his undertaking crowned with happy success. Thus Esther, before she adventured upon that heroic attempt of going uncalled into the king's presence, to beg the life of her people, given to the butchery and slaughter by the king's seal, at bloody Haman's request (an action that carried death and danger on the face of it), she first goes to God by fasting and prayer, and gets all the auxiliary forces of others prayers she can; and attended with this convoy, she, against the Persian law, presents herself before the king, and speeds; for, instead of losing her own life, which was forfeited by the law for this attempt, she reverseth the unjust judgment passed upon the life of her people, and recoils it upon the head of him that laid the plot. Prayer had so unlocked and opened the king's heart, that she hath but what she asks at the king's hands.

No such engine to facilitate and carry on any great design to its desired end, as this of extraordinary prayer. Who could have believed that Ezra and his company of pilgrims should all get safe from Babylon to Jerusalem, being so generally hated every where? Now, what stratagem doth this leader of his people use to secure his passage, and escape the fury of his enemies? Doth he desire a band of the Persian king to be their guard? No, he hath gloried so much of that God they served, that he is ashamed the king should think how he was not willing to cast himself upon his protection; but he goes to fasting and prayer, Ezra viii. 21. then they take their march, and find the way all along cleared before them, ver. 31.

Our blessed Saviour hath sanctified this duty for this end in his own holy example, who, when to chuse and send forth the twelve to preach the gospel, that they may speed the better in their embassy, he sends them forth under the conduct of prayer, and to that end spends the preceding night himself in prayer, Luke vi. 12, 13. Now, though every Christian is not called forth, or likely to be in all his life, to such great and public enterprizes as some others are, yet if he will observe the several passages of his more private employments, and turns of providence in the course of his life, he shall find many such actions occur, as give him a fair hint to make use of this duty.

Haply thou art to enter upon a calling, or in the calling thou art meetest with many difficulties and temptations. Thou hast a long journey, or dangerous voyage, to take; thou hast to do with a subtle potent adversary; though thy cause be good, yet like to be outwitted or overborn. Here is a fair errand put into thy mouth,

mouth, to go before the Lord for counsel, assistance, and protection.

May be thou hast children, and these are to be disposed of into callings, or new relations; and is not this a great undertaking, wherein thou hast a great adventure going in their bottom? Will not the issue that depends upon this great change of their condition lay the foundation of much grief or joy to thee? Yet how slighty are many herein, as if it were of little more importance to marry a child, than it is to put off a horse or cow at a fair? Few matches are, alas, thus made in heaven—I mean by solemn prayer engaging God in the business. Abraham's servant puts many parents to shame; he hard at prayer for success in his journey, when sent to take a wife for his master's son, and not they for their children. But I wonder not that they, who propound low and carnal ends to themselves in such enterprizes, should forget by prayer both to ask his counsel in the match, or invite him to offer his blessing at the wedding.

SECT. II.—Secondly, When the Christian is in the dark concerning any truth, and cannot satisfy his judgment by humble and diligent enquiry he hath made after it.

Now is a fit season to take up this extraordinary duty, as an excellent means to be led into the knowledge of the mind of God therein. Prayer is the proper key to unlock God's heart; and he alone can open our understandings, and satisfy our scruples.—This course Daniel took, and got more understanding by his fasting and prayer than by all his study; for a messenger is sent from heaven *to give him skill and understanding*, Dan. ix. 20, 21, 22, 23. and again, chap. x. 12. in both he sped. And the angel is careful to let him know that it was his extraordinary praying that procured this extraordinary favour; and also how acceptable his motion was, by the easy access and quick dispatch it found with God; and therefore tells him in both, that he had no sooner set upon this course of afflicting his soul, but he was heard, and the messenger ordered to give him an answer to his prayer.

Surely prayer hath not lost its credit in heaven, but is now as welcome to God as ever; and though an angel be not the messenger to bring the saint an answer, yet he shall have it by as sure and more honourable a hand, even the Holy Spirit, whose office is to lead his people into truth. Thus Cornelius, Acts x. came to be instructed in the mystery of the gospel, upon his extraordinary seeking of God by fasting and prayer. It is very probable this good man, in those divided times, wherein he saw many zealous for the old way of Jewish worship, and others preach up a new way, stood in some doubt what to do; and this might stir him up by fasting and prayer to ask counsel, and beg further light of God to direct him in the way of truth, as may seem by

the tenor of the message sent him from God in the vision, while he was at prayer, which bade him *send to Joppa for one Simon, whose name is Peter, and he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do*, ver. 5, 6.

And certainly, in our divided times, wherein there is so much difference in judgment, had there been less wrangling among ourselves, and more wrestling with God for his teaching spirit, we had been in a fairer way to find the door of truth, which so many are yet groping for. The way of controversies is dusty, and contentious dispute raiseth this dust, and blows it most into their eyes that gallop fastest in it; so that they miss the truth, which humble souls find upon their knees at the throne of grace. When the apostles were quarrelling, then they got nothing from Christ but a chiding, Luke xii. 14. &c.; but when they were praying together earnestly, then he sent the spirit to teach them, Acts ii.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, When the Christian is under great affliction.

Now is a fit season, if he be able for the work: *Is any among you afflicted, let him pray*, James v. that is, let him then be more than ordinary in this duty; for he must, and will, if a Christian, pray when he is not afflicted, as well as when he is. But the meaning is, he must now pray after an extraordinary manner: he must now pray with more vehemency; for though in all our addresses to God, we are to express the lively workings of our hearts to God, without which our prayers are unsavoury, (cold prayers ever find cold welcome,) yet God expects, and it hath been always the care of holy men, in their extraordinary applications to this duty of prayer, to wind up their affections to a pitch higher than ordinary, having the advantage of some special occasion to help them thereunto. Look upon them in some great strait and affliction, and you shall find them exceeding themselves, and put upon them a prince-like spirit. So Jacob behaved himself in prayer, Gen. xxxii. 28. as a prince fighting in the field for his crown and kingdom, he wrestled with the angel, who was no other than God himself; that is, he strained, as it were, every vein in his heart, and put forth his whole might in prayer, as a wrestler would do that grapples with a potent adversary.

Moses is so transported by zeal for Israel, when a dismal cloud of wrath impended them for their idolatry, that he offers rather to die upon the place, than to go down the mount, and not carry the joyful news of a pardon with him, Exod. xxxii. 32. And Nehemiah, when he had been afflicting his soul, and praying before the Lord, it was with such vehemency, that the anguish of his spirit looked out at his eyes, and left a mark of sorrow upon his

his very countenance, which his prince could observe as he waited on him.

Again, In affliction we are called to pray, as more intensively, so more extensively; I mean, longer and oftener. Thus I find that *ektenesteron proseukato* of our Saviour, rendered by Lucas Brugensis and others, *prolixius orabat*, he prayed longer; that is, he spent more time than ordinary in it. Thrice, one after another, we find him at it, Mat. xxvi. 44. His agony was great, and the waves of his affliction violent, and therefore he doubles, yea, trebles his prayer, with deep sighs and strong cries to his Father. Nature never strains so to its utmost, as when it is oppressed; then temples work, lungs heave, and heart pants; so in affliction the spirit of prayer should be increased and distended.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, When the Christian is buffeted with any temptation, or overpowered with corruption, and cannot with the use of ordinary means quench the one, or master and mortify the other.

If the short dagger of ordinary prayer will not reach the heart of a lust, then it is time to draw out this long sword of extraordinary prayer upon it. There is a *kind of devils*, our Saviour tells us, *that go not out but by prayer and fasting*, Mat. xvii. 21. You know the occasion of this speech was that complaint of one concerning his lunatic son: *I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*

Thus some poor souls complain, they have come to the word preached so long, in their daily prayers begged power over such a lust, resolved against it many a time, and none of these means could cure it; what can they now do more? Here thou art told: bring thy condition to Christ in this solemn ordinance of prayer and fasting; this hath at last been the happy means to strengthen many a poor Christian to be avenged on those spiritual enemies, which have outbraved all the former, and, like Sampson, to pull down the devil's house upon his head.

SECT. V.—Fifthly, When sin doth abound more than ordinarily in the times and places we live in.

Sinning times have ever been the saints' praying times; this sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people, and to bewail their abominations before the Lord, Ezra ix. And Jeremiah tells the wicked rout of his degenerate age, that his *soul should weep in secret for their pride*, Jer. xiii. Indeed sometimes sin comes to such a heighth and insolence, that this is almost all the godly can do, to get into a corner and bewail the general pollutions of the present age: as he told Luther, *Abi frater in cellam et dic, miserere Domine. If the foundations of the earth be destroyed, what can the righteous do?* Psalm xi.

Such dismal days of national confusion our eyes have seen, when the foundations of government were destroyed, and all hurled into a military confusion: When it is thus with a people, what can the righteous do? Yes, this they may, and should do, *Fast and pray*. There is yet a God in heaven to be sought to, when a people's deliverance is thrown beyond the help of human policy or power. Now is the fit time to make their appeal to God, as the words following hint, ver. 4. *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven;* in which words, God is presented sitting in heaven as a temple, for their encouragement, I conceive, in such a desperate state of affairs, to direct their prayers thither for deliverance. And certainly this hath been the engine that hath been, above any, instrumental, to screw up this poor nation again, and set it upon the foundation of that lawful government, from which it had so dangerously slid.

SECT. VI.—Sixthly, To name no more. Times of great expectation are times for extraordinary prayer; when the people of God have been big with expectation of great mercies approaching, then have they been more abounding in prayer.

As the cocks crow thickest towards break of day, so the saints, the nearer they have apprehended the accomplishment of promises made to the church, the more instant they used to be in prayer. When a woman with child her reckoning is near out, then she desires her midwife to be at hand. And prayer hath had the name of old for its excellent usefulness to obstetricate mercies: *the children are come to the birth*, said good Hezekiah, and then he desires the help of the prophet's prayer for the fair delivery of it: *Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left*, Isa. xxxvii. 5. When Daniel the prophet had learnt by study, that the happy period of the seventy years captivity (bound upon the Jews' neck for their sin) was now at hand, Dan. ix. 1. then in an extraordinary manner he sets himself to pray, and afflict his soul before the Lord. And we have reason to hope, that spiritual Babylon, Rome I mean, is not long lived; it is high time, therefore, that the saints should fall more earnestly than ever to dig her grave for her by their prayers.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVII.

Reasons why Extraordinary Prayer is to be superadded to Ordinary.

Quest. 4. BUT why is extraordinary prayer to be superadded by the Christian, to his ordinary exercise of it in his daily course?

Answ. First, in obedience to the command of God.

He commands not only that we should *pray always*, but *with all prayer* also; and extraordinary prayer is one kind among the rest; and let none of us say, is it not enough to pray once or twice every day? but we must, upon some occasions, devote a whole day also, to the damage of calling and family. O what niggards would some be towards God, were they left free to devote what time they thought fit for his worship? This cavil sounds too like that of Judas, Matt. xxvi. *To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. But this he said, not that he loved the poor, but because he was a thief.* Truly so, when I hear some carnal wretches cry out against this waste of time in praying and fasting, how much might the improvement of that time, if laid out in their callings, have advantaged their families, wives, and children? I am ready to think, it is not because they have such a care of their relations as they pretend, for they who grudge a day for prayer, can throw some of them, yea many, away at the ale-house, or in idleness; but they carry thievish hearts in their bosoms, which love to rob God of his due, and care not how little service they put him off with.

Is he a loyal subject that pays the ordinary tribute to his prince, but if occasion of state requires a subsidy, this he refuseth, or doth it grudgingly? God's commands are none of them, no, not this which carries some outward severity on it, so grievous, that any should need to groan or grumble under them. Those yokes (duties and commands, I mean) whose outsides seem most hard, have the softest lining within: what seems harder than suffering? and yet when are saints fuller of heaven's joy? What duty more austere than this of fasting and afflicting our souls? and yet in the breast of this lion, that scares sensual wretches, the Christian finds the sweetest honey-comb of inward comforts. Temple-work is sure to be well paid, if well done; though it be never so little work in his house, God will not have it done gratis—none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nought; and therefore he takes it in great disdain at their hands, who durst say, *What profit is it*

that we have kept his ordinance, and walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? Mal. iii. 14. Whereas the fault was not in the duty, but in themselves, that they got no more by it: as if a naughty servant should bring himself by his riot and excess to poverty, and then give out a hard master hath undone him.

Secondly, To comport with the providence of God, by a suitable return of duty to his actings and dispensations towards us.

When God is extraordinary in his providence, he expects his people should be more than ordinary in seeking of him; what else means that of the prophet? *Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel,* Amos iv. 12. Here God alarms them by his extraordinary proceedings intended against them, take the hint of this warning, and apply themselves speedily to the solemn practice of repentance, and humbling of their souls, as a suitable posture to meet God in, and keep off the storm of his wrath now gathering against them.

Is it not high time for a nation to betake them to their defensive arms, when a mighty host is marching against them? so Isa. xxvi. 20, 21. *Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee,* &c. Here he sends his people to their chambers and closets, that they may by afflicting their souls and by fervent prayer, find a hiding in the day of his indignation; and why must they do thus? ver. 21. *For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.* The rising of God out of his place imports some notable enterprize he is about to do; and when the master riseth, it is not manners for the servant to sit still, but to rise also, and prepare to follow him where he goes. God takes special notice how we behave ourselves, and comport with his dispensations of judgment or mercy, Isa. xxii. 12. *In that day the Lord called to weeping and mourning,* i. e. he called them by the voice of his providence, as well as his prophets, the nature of which was such, that had not their lusts bunged up their ears, and made them deaf, they could not but hear and understand, that now was the time, if ever, that God expected to see them in sackcloth and tears, humbling their souls before him. Now see how heinously he takes their security and prophane slighting of his providence, ver. 14. *And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

Few sins more provoke God than this, Psal. xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* So Dan. v. 22. *And thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thyself, though thou knowest all this;* this

this lost him his life and kingdom, as the contrary saved Ahab's for a time, though it was not so sincere as it ought; a temporal humiliation got him a temporal benefit.

Thirdly, For the great influence that this extraordinary duty solemnly performed would have upon our whole life and course of godliness.

To keep the body healthful, requires not only daily food, but now and then physic also; for, in the soundest constitution, and that advantaged with the best care and temperance, there will in time such a quantity of superfluous humours gather, that nature, without help, cannot digest: and truly the temper of the soul is as infirm, and needs as much tending as doth the body. Ordinary prayer is the saint's food; he can as little miss the constant returns of it as his usual meals. But extraordinary is his physic, to clear and discharge the soul of those distempers which it contracts, and cannot conquer by the use of ordinary means; as also to advance and heighten the Christian's graces to a further degree of strength and activity.

As God hath in his wise providence ordered one star of great influence to be at a certain season of the year in conjunction with the sun, for the more effectual ripening the harvest in these colder parts of the world; so hath he in the same wisdom appointed for the Christian's spiritual advantage and help, in this cold climate of the world, that this solemn duty should now and then be taken into conjunction with our ordinary exercise of devotion; for want of which it is, that many ripen slower, both in their graces and comforts, than some of their fellow-saints, who sit often under the influences of this powerful quickening ordinance.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Directions towards the Holy Performing this Solemn Duty of Extraordinary Prayer.

Quest. 5. WHAT counsel or direction may be given to the acceptable and successful performance of this solemn duty?

Answ. I come now to shut up my discourse on this point, in answering this last question: a serious necessary one it is, for indeed it is an edge-tool, of excellent use, but dangerous in his hand that knows not how to use it—like some physic, if it doth not purge, it poisons. In the same fat soil, where the corn is best, the weeds also are rankest. Neither grace nor sin grow to such

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a heighth any where, as in those that converse much with this solemn ordinance. And therefore, as they who are in a ship upon a swift stream, had need the more look to the steerage of it, because they will be carried amain either to their port or wreck; so have they reason to be very careful in the management of this service, the issue whereof cannot be ordinary, because the duty is extraordinary.

Now the counsel or direction to be given must necessarily be divided into these three general heads; something would be directed as preparatory, before this undertaking; something to be observed in the performance, and also after the dispatch of it.—The city cannot be safe, unless the whole line be kept; it is all one whether the enemy breaks in at the front, flank, or rear of an army; or whether the ship be taken at sea, or sink in the haven when the voyage is over.

First, Some preparatory direction before the duty.

Now there is a double preparation requisite, the one more remote, the other immediate; or, if you please, habitual preparation and actual.

There is a remote and habitual preparation, of great use to the performance of this solemn duty, and it lies in this, To look, Christian, that thou shewest a conscionable care in thy daily walking, and the constant exercise of this duty in thy ordinary daily offices of devotion, or else thou art like to make but bad work when thou comest to engage in the extraordinary.

1. Thy neglect in the ordinary duty will exceedingly indispose thee for the extraordinary.

Who would take a foggy horse out of the pasture to run a race? In extraordinary prayer, the soul is to be put on her full speed, all its powers to be strained to their utmost ability, and to continue long in the work also; is he fit for so swift and long a race, whose soul is not kept in breath by the daily exercise of ordinary prayer, but lets his graces, if he hath any, be choaked up with sloth or formality? The more any member is used, the stronger it is: the right hand, which is our working hand, hath more activity than the left, that is used less. A weakness will certainly invade the powers of thy lazy soul, which, though thou perceivest not as thou sittest in thy chair of sloth, will appear when thou risest, and thinkest to go forth in any solemn duty, as thou wert wont to do; then thou wilt find, with Sampson, that thou hast lost thy strength in the lap of sloth and negligence. As fasting is too strong for new bottles, so it is too sweet wine for to be put into fusty and mouldy ones; now the only way to keep a bottle or a cask sweet, is not to let it stand long empty without any liquor in it.

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2. As it will indispose thee for this solemn duty, so it is a bad symptom concerning thy spiritual state itself, which is worse than the former.

Grace works uniformly, and discovers a comely proportion in its actings. Haply you may see the son of a prince on some high day, in richer and more glorious apparel, than on another day that is ordinary; but you shall never find him in sordid, ragged, and beggarly clothes; still he will be clad as becomes a king's son.—Possibly, yea, it is likely, that you may see the Christian come forth in an extraordinary day and duty, with more enlargement of affections in prayer, and all his graces raised to a higher glory in their actings than ordinary; but you shall never find him with his robe of grace laid aside; still the true saint will declare his high birth by his every-day course; he will not live in the neglect of ordinary duties, and cast off communion with God in his daily walking.

O 'tis the brand of an hypocrite to have his devotion come by fits, and, like a drift of snow, to lie thick in one place, and none in another; to seem for zeal like angels at a time, and live like atheists many weeks after. Surely grace acts more evenly, and is never so unlike itself. It is ill living in that miser's house, who hath never any good meat on the table but when he makes a feast, and that is very seldom; or with him that upon an occasion hath a day of prayer, but starves himself and family, or pinches them in their daily fare. Well, never think of meddling with this extraordinary duty, till thou inurest thyself to the ordinary exercise of prayer, and takest more care in thy daily walking with God.

Secondly, There is a more close and immediate preparation required; and this I called actual preparation.

It is true indeed, he that is conscientious and careful in the ordinary exercises of religion, hath a great advantage of him that either neglects them, or is loose in them; for his heart must needs stand in a nearer disposition to this extraordinary service than the other: as he that is up and hath his clothes on, is more ready to go on his master's errand, than he that is asleep in his bed.—Yet besides this care in our daily walking, there needs some further pains to be taken with his heart, to raise him into such a frame, as may comport with this solemn service. The neat house-wife, though she endeavours always to keep her house clean, yet against some good time (as they call it) she is more than ordinary curious in washing her rooms, and scouring her vessels, that they may not only be clean, but bright: and so should the Christian. Now is the time for thee to scour off the rust thou contractest in thy daily course; and to brighten thy graces unto further

further glory than appears in thy every-day walking; to do which, will cost pains, and require time.

The Christian is like some heavy birds, as the bustard and others, that cannot get upon the wing without a run of a furlong or two, or a great bell that takes some time to thee raising of it. Now meditation is the great instrument thou art to use in this preparatory work; allow thyself some considerable portion of time, before the day of extraordinary prayer for thy retirement, wherein thou mayest converse most privately with thy own heart; this cannot be done in a crowd, neither must it be left to the time of engaging in the extraordinary duty; we cannot do both duties together; the husbandman cannot whet his scythe and cut the grass at once. Betake thyself, therefore, to thy closet, and in the first place call thy thoughts off the world, and as much as possible clear thy soul of all that is foreign to the work thou art about; this is as the wiping of the table-book, before we can write any thing well on it.

Now the more effectually to gather in thy heart to a holy seriousness, and compact thy thoughts together, it were expedient for thee at first to lay before thee the grand importance of the approaching service: thou art going to stand before the great God, and that very near, in an extraordinary duty, wherein thou wilt either sanctify or prophane his reverend name in a high degree, and accordingly are to expect his love or wrath, in some choice blessing or dreadful curse, to be the issue and result of thy undertaking; gird the loins of thy mind with some such awful apprehensions as these. As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so this holy fear of miscarrying in so solemn a duty, would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand. *In thy fear will I worship*, Psal. v. 7.

Such will the print on the wax be, as the sculpture is on the seal; if the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. Well, now the court is set, and silence commanded, a few particulars I shall propound for thy thoughts to go upon in this preparatory work.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIX.

Examination of our Hearts, about the End we propound in this Undertaking, very necessary.

FIRST, Examine thy soul, what end thou propoundest to thyself in the intended service of extraordinary prayer.

None but a child or a fool will run before he knows what is his errand. The end is that which a wise man looks to before he sets his hand to any work; and the more weighty the enterprize is, the more necessary this is.

1. Consider, if the end thou propoundest be evil, the duty cannot be good, because thy heart is not sincere in it. The sincerity of the heart discovers itself in the mark it sets up, and end it aims at, in a duty, not in the external performance of it. The thief and the honest traveller may be found riding in the same road, but they have different aims therein, and this distinguisheth them. Thus the saint and hypocrite join in the same duty, shoot, as it were, in the same bow, but their eye takes not the same aim, and therefore their arrows meet not in the same butt. The prayers of the one are rejected as abominable, and the other graciously accepted.

Who more seemingly devout than the captive Jews, that kept up a fast for seventy years together? yet God gave them but little thanks for their pains, because their end was not right, Zech. vii. 5. *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even the seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* The faster a man gallops, if he be out of his way it is the worse. Zeal is the best or worst thing in a duty; if the end be right, O 'tis excellent; but if wrong, stark naught; and it is no easy thing to propound a right end. The eye must be set right in the head before it can look right. If the piece be wrong made, it will never carry the bullet straight to the mark. A false heart (and every carnal heart is such) cannot have a true end.

2. Consider, that your endeavour in the duty will bear proportion, and be commensurate to the end you propound therein; if your end be low, your endeavour will be no more than to reach that end; as he that intends to build a little cottage, contents himself with ordinary stuff, clay and thatch; but he that designs some stately palace, provides more precious materials: thus David was very curious in the materials he laid aside for the temple. *For the palace,* saith he, *is not for man, but the Lord God; therefore he prepared, with all his might, gold and silver,* &c. 1 Chron. xxix. 1, 2, 3.

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The hypocrite's ends in a fast are low and base, his credit with men, carnal profit, and the like; accordingly, his endeavour is laid out on the external part of the duty, a demure countenance, devout posture, and such expressions in prayer as may most take with those that hear him, and this is all he looks at; but the gracious soul saith, with David, This palace I build, this duty I perform, is not for man, but for the Lord God, and therefore his chief care is to provide more precious materials—a broken heart for sin in his confessions, faith and fervency in his petitions, love and thankfulness in his acknowledgments of mercies received.

Quest. But when is an evil end propounded in this duty?

Answ. The end we propound may be evil, either intrinsically, when the thing we aim at is evil in its own nature, or else from some irregularity, in placing it too high or low in our aim.

First, The ends that are intrinsically evil; to name two.

1. When a person or a people shall fast and pray, to cover and more slightly carry on any wicked enterprize.

This is a horrid evil, a monstrous abomination: what is this but to hang out the sign of an angel at the door, that they may play the devil within the less suspected? yet such deep hypocrisy hath the heart of man discovered, that it dare come and lay its cockatrice egg under the very wing of God, and make use of this his solemn ordinance, as an expedient to hatch their wicked designs. The fox, they say, when hard put to it, will, to save himself, fall in among the dogs, and hunt among them as one of the company. Thus the hypocrite, the better to conceal his wicked projects, will run among the saints, and make as loud a cry in this duty and others, as the best of them all. It is the devil's old trick, and he hath learned it his instruments, to wrap up wicked plots in the gilded covers of God's ordinances.

What plotting and counterplotting was there between Sechem the son of Hamor, and Simeon and Levi? and the expedient which both used to accomplish their design, was an ordinance of God; the one hopes, by submitting to it, to hook into his hands the whole estate of Jacob's family, *Shall not their substance be ours?* and the other persuades them to it, that when they were sore, they might butcher them without resistance. Absalom, that he may the better play the traitor against his father, begs leave to pay his vow at Hebron. Jezebel sets her trap for Naboth; and that he may the more surely fall into her clutches, she croucheth and humbleth herself even before God in a fast. And the demure Pharisees, who bragged so much of their fasting, our Saviour was bold to tell them, it was to devour the widows houses; but as the father hath it, *Manducant in terris quod apud inferos*

feros digerunt: They devour on earth those morsels, that will be heavy on their stomachs in hell to be digesting to eternity.

Thus the hypocrite, like Antichrist, sits in the temple of God, and there commits his execrable abominations, turning a house of prayer into a den of thieves. O tremble at this great wickedness! It gives a crimson tincture to a sin, when it is committed under a disguise of religion.

2. When a person thinks by fasting and prayer to satisfy God for his sin, or merit any favour at the hands of God.

This is wicked and abominable, and as contrary to the nature of prayer, as buying is to begging. *The poor*, saith Solomon, *useth intreaties*, Prov. xviii. 23. we do not use to pay and pray too. When Job resolves on prayer, he renounceth any plea taken from his own righteousness, *Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my Judge*, Job ix. 15. We cannot have the benefit of the throne of grace, till we quit our legal plea. Christ indeed pleads as righteous, and therefore desires what he asks for us as just, because he hath paid for it; but we pray as sinners, and therefore crave all as mercy: yea, though we plead Christ's merit, because he is the greatest and freest gift of all other; yet such is the pride of man's heart, that he had rather play the merchant, and truck his duties for God's blessings, than be thought to receive them *gratis*.

This was the temper of the carnal Jews; they thought to pacify God for their sin, as Jacob his angry brother, with the droves and flocks of duties, which they presented him with, and thought their services undervalued when they were not accepted for good payment; hence their bold expostulating the case with the Lord. *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?* Isa. lviii. 3. such a high opinion they had of themselves.

O take heed of this: pride turns an ordinance into an idol.—God accepts our fasts and prayers, when used for humiliation, but abhors them when we bring them for our justification. The Pharisee lost himself by his proud brags, how oft he fasted, while the poor publican got the prize by a humble confession of his sin, Luke xviii. He that thinks to wash his face with puddle water, instead of making it clean, will leave it fouler; truly our best tears are not over clean, and can they make us clean, that need themselves to be washed? Holy Job durst not rely on his purity. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment*, Job ix. 30, 31, 32.

Secondly,

Secondly, The end may be, though not intrinsically evil, yet evil from some irregularity in misplacing it; as when we make that our ultimate end which should only be our subordinate end in the duty.

That which would be lawful standing in its proper place, becomes sinful when the ultimate end is crowded down to make room for that. The glory of God is to be the ultimate end, not only in every duty of worship, but in all our common actions also, even to eating and drinking; those low actions are to be elevated to this high end, 1 Cor. x. 31. and good reason he should be our utmost end, from whom we received our beginning: *all things are of him*, and therefore fit they should be *to him*; the river water empties itself into the bosom of the sea, from whence it flows.

Now, if we are to have so high an end in our lowest actions, then surely in our highest; and such are acts of worship, in which we have immediately to do with God, and are thence called priests, *to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. There is indeed another end also for which ordinances are appointed, viz. to be conduit-pipes, for conveying all kind of blessings from God unto us; but this is an inferior end, and to be subordinate to the former, or else we make the glory of God an underling to our particular good, which God will not endure.

Possibly we are in some great affliction, this sets us to pray for deliverance; thus far we keep our way; but then we turn aside, when our deliverance is more regarded by us than his glory; this is to set the subject in his prince's chair, *Uti Deo, ut fruamur mundo*, to make use of God, that we may enjoy the creature.—Beware of this. Whatever we prefer, in our desires, above the glory of God, is an idol-worship by us: The heart can engrave as well as the hand; and an idol in the heart is as bad as one set up in the house.

Quest. But how may I find whether the glory of God, or the particular good thing I pray for, be that which I make my chief end in duty?

Answ. It may be discovered two ways.

1. By thy carriage in prayer. 2. After prayer.

First, by the carriage of thy heart in duty.

If the glory of God be chiefly aimed at by thee, this will give a tincture to the whole duty, and be influential upon every part of it; thou wilt suit thy requests to this end. For, as there is a secret force from the arm that draws the bow, impressed on the arrow, which carries it to the mark aimed at by the shooter; so there is a secret power which carries the soul out in duty, to act suitably to the end he chiefly propounds, and desires to obtain;

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for no man would willingly obstruct and hinder what above all he wisheth for.

We will suppose, pardon of sin is the mercy thou prayest for; now if thou desirest sincerely the glory of God, as well as this mercy, yea, above it, this will direct thee in thy confession of sin, to afflict thy soul more for the dishonour thou hast by it reflected on God, than the wrath thou hast incurred thyself. So in thy petition, thou darest not beg thy pardon on terms that were dishonourable for God to give it on, but will desire the mercy in such a way as his glory may be both secured and advanced. Now God cannot pardon the sin of an impenitent wretch, that holds still the love and liking of his lust, without infinite wrong to his glorious name. And, therefore, if his glory be so high in thy eye as thou sayest, thou wilt cry as earnestly for his sanctifying grace as for pardoning mercy; and not merely because thou canst not have pardon without it, as a sick man desires a bitter potion to save his life, not that he loves it, but because by it thou shalt be fitted to glorify him.

Secondly, It may be discovered by thy carriage after duty, and that in two particulars.

1. When the mercy prayed for is obtained.

If thou didst chiefly aim at the glory of God in begging it, thy chief care will be to lay it out for his glory now thou hast it; whereas he that aimed at himself in praying for it, will as little regard God in the using of it, as he did in begging it. It is natural for things to resolve into their principles. The child that Hannah obtained of God, she dedicates unto the Lord; and why? but because this was her end in praying for him, 1 Sam. i. 11. compared with 28. When David's prayer is heard, and he delivered, mark what his resolve from this is, *I will walk before God in the land of the living*, Psalm cxvi. 9.; and again, *O Lord, truly I am thy servant, thou has loosed my bonds*, ver. 16. He returns the mercy to God, by improving it for him in a holy life. How can we think he aimed at the glory of God in praying for health, that runs away from God as soon as he is set upon his legs? Or in praying for wealth, that lays it out upon his lust?

2. When the thing prayed for is denied.

He that aims sincerely at God's glory in prayer for a mercy, I speak now of such mercies as are but conditionally promised, he will cheerfully submit to the will of God in a denial thereof, because God can in such petitions glorify himself, by denying as well as granting them. David prayed and fasted for the life of his sick child—it dies notwithstanding; now does this denial make him fall out with God? Is he clamorous and discontent? No, it raiseth no storm in his heart, or lowering weather in his countenance, to hinder him in the service of God; he washeth

his tears from his blubbered cheeks, changes his apparel, and goes cheerfully into the house of God and worshippeth, 2 Sam. xii. 20. so powerfully did the will of God determine his will.

Thus as the heavenly bodies are by the *primum mobile* carried contrary to their particular inclination, so grace in a saint overrules his natural affection, and carries him into a compliance with the will of God, even when it crosseth his own. Our blessed Saviour had natural affections, which made him pray the bitter cup of his passion might, if possible, pass from him; yet not so, but he was willing to take a denial, and therefore desires his Father to glorify himself, though it were by taking away his life, John xii. 27, 28.

Secondly, The second thing thou art to do, having fixed thy end right, is to make a privy search into thy heart and life, whereby thou mayest be enabled more fully and feelingly to lay open thy condition before the Lord.

Now there are three heads of enquiry thou art to go upon.

1. For the sins thou hast committed.
2. For the mercies thou hast received.
3. For the wants thou liest under.

First, For the sins thou hast committed.

The great business of a fast lies in the practice of repentance, and this cannot be done without a narrow scrutiny of the heart: *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord*, Lam. iii. 40. The thief must be found before he can be tried, and tried before he is condemned and executed. Some sins, no doubt, may be taken and apprehended with little pains; but if thou beest true to God and thy own soul, thou wouldst not willingly let any of the company escape.

How canst thou expect pardon for any, that desirest not justice on all? And how canst thou say, thou desirest justice on those sins which thou endeavourest not to apprehend? That constable that having a hue-and-cry brought him for a pack of thieves, and lets any get away rather than he will rise to search for them, shews his zeal to justice is little. I do not say, thou wilt be able to find all; it is enough if by thy diligence thou givest proof of thy sincerity, that thou wouldst not conceal any.

Set thyself therefore in good earnest to the work; beset thy heart and life round, as men would do a wood where murderers are lodged; hunt back to the several stages of thy life, youth, and riper years, all the capacities and relations thou hast stood in; thy calling, general and particular, every place where thou hast lived, and thy behaviour in them. Bid memory bring it in its old records, and read over what passages are there written; call conscience in to depose what it knows concerning thee, and encourage it to speak freely, without mincing the matter. And take heed

heed thou dost not snib this witness, as some corrupt judges use, when they would favour a bad cause, or give it secret instructions, as David did Joab, to deal gently with thee. Be willing to have thy condition opened fully, and all thy coverings turned up; for many times foul designs are hid with fair pretences, as the barrels of powder in the Parliament cellar under coals and billets.

Now when thou hast gone as far as thou canst, begging heaven's help in the thing to search and try thee, whether there be any further wickedness that thou hast not found out, then burden thy soul, judge thyself for them with all the brokenness of heart thou canst get, justifying God in the sentence denounced against thee for them. God will have thee lay thy neck on the block, though he means not to give the stroke. In a word, labour in thy meditations to give every sin its due accent; and suffer thy thoughts to dwell on them, till thou findest the fire of thy indignation kindle in thy heart against them; yea, flame forth into such a holy zeal against them, as makes thee put thyself under an oath to endeavour their utter ruin and destruction. Then thou art fit to beg thy own life, when thou hast vowed the death of thy sins.

Secondly, Mercy received.

Thou hast these, at least the most signal instances of them, upon the file, unless thou beest a very bad husband for thy soul. If God thinks fit to bottle his saints' tears, they surely should not forget to book his mercies. Now there are some special seasons, wherein the saint should take down this chronicle of God's mercies, to read in it; and this is one, when he is to engage in this extraordinary duty.

1. As the most effectual means to melt his heart for sin.

Mercy gives the greatest aggravation to sin, and therefore must needs be the most powerful instrument to break the heart for sin; With this God doth reproach sinning Israel, *Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise!* Deut. xxxii. 6.; they could not have been evil to such a heighth, if God had not been so good to them. When God would break the sore of his people's sin, he compounds a poultice with his choicest mercies, and lays it warm to their hearts. David had sat many months under the lectures of the law, unhumbled for his bloody complicated sin; but Nathan is sent to preach a rehearsal sermon to him of the many mercies God had graced him with; and while these coals are pouring on his head, his heart dissolves presently, 2 Sam. xii. The frost seldom is quite out of the earth, till the sun hath got some power in the spring to dissolve its bands; but then it sets it a-going: Neither will the hardness of the heart be to any purpose removed, until the soul be thoroughly warmed with the

sense of God's mercies, Ezek. xx. 43. *There shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loath yourselves in your own sight.* Where is that there? but when amidst the thoughts of his mercies, as by the context is manifest. A pardon from the prince hath made some weep, whom the sight of the block and axe could not move.— Sight of wrath inflames the conscience, but sense of mercy kindly melts the heart, and overcomes the will.

2. As a necessary ingredient in all our prayers.

Let your requests be made known with thanksgiving, Phil. iv. This spice must be in all our offerings. He that prays for mercies he wants, and is not thankful for mercies received, he may seem mindful of himself, but he is forgetful of God; and so takes the right course to shut his prayers out of doors. God will not put his mercies into a rent purse, and such is an unthankful heart, for it drops them soon out of his memory.

Thirdly, Thy wants.

Before the tradesman goes to the fair, he looks over his shop, that he may know what commodity he most lacks. Thou goest to this duty to furnish thyself with the graces and mercies thou needest; is it not necessary, then, to see what thy present store is? What thy personal, and what thy relational needs are? Not forgetting the public, in whose peace and happiness thou art so much concerned; for if this ship sink, thou canst not be safe in thy private cabin. To leave all these to occur and overtake thee, without charging thy thoughts with them by previous meditation, is too high a presumption for a sober Christian to take up.

Besides, thy affections need help, as well as thy memory; nay, we may sooner bring our sins and wants to mind, than lay them to heart; it is easier to know them, than knowing them, to be deeply affected with them: And we do not come in prayer to tell God a bare story of these things, but feelingly and affectionately to make our moan and complaint, with deep sighs and groans, to him that can pardon the one, and relieve us in the other.

Thirdly, When thou hast upon this scrutiny kindled thy affections, with the bellows of meditation, into a deep sense of these things, then furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God.

The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent; and such fervency ever speeds, and returns with victory out of the field of prayer: *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, James v. Words in prayer are but as powder, the promise is the bullet that doth the execution, faith the grace that chargeth the soul with it, and fervency

fervency that gives fire, and dischargeth it into God's bosom with such a force, that the Almighty cannot deny it entrance, because indeed he will not. Now, as he is an imprudent soldier that leaves his bullets to be cast, or fitted to the bore of his piece, till he comes into the field; so he is an unwise Christian that doth not provide and sort promises suitable to his condition and request, before he engageth in so solemn a service.

Daniel first searcheth out the promise, what God had engaged himself to do for his people, as also when the date of this promise expired; and when by meditation and study upon it, he had raised his heart to a firm belief thereof, then he sets upon God with a holy violence in prayer, and presseth him close, not only as a merciful God, but righteous also, to remember them, now the bond of his promise was coming out; *O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem,* &c. Dan. ix. 16.—The mightier any is in the word, the more mighty will he be in prayer.

CHAP. L.

Directions to be observed in and after the Duty.

Direct. 2. HAVING dispatched the preparatory directions, now I come to those that are to be observed in the duty itself; and because those will serve for this purpose which are given in another place, for the duty of prayer in general, I shall name but a few, and those briefly.

SECT. I.—First, When the time to engage thyself in this extraordinary duty is come, beware thou settest not upon it in the confidence of thy preparation, whatever thy care or success therein hath been.

What a worthy doctor directed ministers, as to their preaching, is applicable to Christians as to their praying; he bade them study for their sermons as if they expected no divine assistance in the pulpit: and when they came into the pulpit, to cast themselves upon divine assistance, as if they had not studied at all.—Thus prepare before thou comest to fast and pray, as if thou wert to meet no further assistance in the duty; but when thou comest to the performance of the duty, cast thyself wholly upon divine assistance, as if thou hadst not at all prepared.

I know not which of the two doth worst, he that presumes upon God's assistance in this great work without preparation, or

he that presumes on his preparation, and relies not, after he hath done his best endeavour, on the gracious assistance of God. The first shews he hath but mean thoughts of this solemn ordinance, yea, low and unworthy thoughts of the great God, with whom he hath to do in it; and the other too high thoughts of himself.

What though now, Christian, thou marchest in goodly array, and thy heart in order; how soon, alas, may all thy preparations be routed, and thy chariot-wheels, which thou hast taken so much pains to oil, be set fast, or knocked off! Now thy thoughts are united, thou thinkest, dost thou know where they will be a few minutes hence, if thy God help thee not to keep them together? Thou canst as easily hold the four winds in a bag, as keep the thoughts of thy fluid mind from gadding. Now thy affections are wound up to some height, but canst thou hold the pegs from slipping? Cannot God wither thy hand while thou stretchest it out in prayer? make thy tongue faulter when thou wouldst make use of it? yea, suffer a sudden damp to fall upon thy spirit, that shall chill all thy affections, and leave thy heart as cold as a stone in thy bosom? *Surely man, at his best estate, is vanity!* And this in regard of the temper of his spirit, as well as in the constitution of his body, and other his worldly advantages.

How oft do we see the gifts of his mind, and the vivacity of his graces, fade and wither in one duty, which at another, when the spirit of God vouchsafed his gentle breath to quicken them, did flourish, and send forth their fragrant spices in abundance? O do not then applaud thyself in thy gourd, which may so soon be smitten; neither commit so great an adventure, as the success of this duty is, in the leaking bottom of thy own preparation.

Secondly, Pray often, rather than very long at a time.

It is hard to be very long in prayer, and not slacken in our affections. Those watches which are made to go longer than ordinary at one winding, do commonly lose towards the end. The flesh is weak, and if the spirits of the body tire, the soul, that rideth on this beast, must needs be cast behind. Our Saviour, when he prayed for his life, we find him praying rather often than long at once. He who in a long journey lights often to let his beast take breath, and then mounts upon him again, will get to his journey's end may be sooner than he that puts him beyond his strength.

Especially observe this in social prayers; for when we pray in company, we must consider them that travel with us in the duty, as Jacob said, *I will lead on softly, as the children are able to endure.* Yet I speak not this, that you should give any check to the spirit of God in his assistances, which sometimes come so strong, that the Christian is, as it were, carried with a full fore-

wind,

wind, and hath the labour of tugging at the oar saved him; the ship of the soul goes with most facility when with most speed; such assistances lift both the person praying, and those that join with him (if gracious, and under the same quickening) in a manner above all weariness. The spirit brings spirits, affections I mean, with him. Such a soul is like a vessel that runs full and fresh, what pours from him is quick and spiritual; whereas, at another time, when the spirit of God denies these assistances, his prayer tastes flat to his own palate, if not to others.

Thirdly, Be very careful to approve thyself faithful in the soul-humbling work of the day.

Let thy confessions be free and full; the sense thou hast of thy sins be deep, and thy sorrow for them sincere and evangelical; for as thou quittest thyself in this, so thou wilt be in all the other parts of the duty: if thou confessest sin feelingly, thou wilt pray against it fervently; if thy sorrow be deep, and reach to thy very heart and spirit, then thy petitions for pardoning mercy, and purging grace, will also come from the heart, be cordial, warm, and vehement: Whereas he that melts not in confession of sin, will freeze in his prayers that he puts up against it; if his tears be false and whorish, *lachrymæ mentiri doctæ*, his desires cannot be true. Why do men ask in their petitions that grace which they do not in their hearts desire, but because they do not feel the smart, and are not loathed with the evil of their sins that they confess. Thus many confess their sins, as beggars sometimes shew their sores, which they are not willing to have cured.

Again, as thou art in confession of sin, so thou wilt be in thy acknowledgments of mercy; the lower thou fallest in the abasement of thyself for thy sins, the higher thou wilt mount in thy praises for his mercies. The rebound of the ball is suitable to the force with which it is thrown down. The deeper the bass is in confession, the shriller will the treble of thy praises be, for these mutually aggravate one another. The greater our mercies are, the greater are our sins; and the greater our sins, the greater are the mercies, which, notwithstanding them, our good God vouchsafeth us. So that the sense we have of one, must needs be in proportion to the other; as we are afflicted for sin, so will we be affected with mercy.

Fourthly, Improve the intervals of prayer with seasonable and suitable meditations, that thou mayest be fitted to return to the work with more life and vigour.

Meditation is prayer's hand-maid, to wait on it, both before and after the performance. It is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart for the duty of prayer, and the harrow to cover the seed when it is sown. As the hopper feeds the mill with grist, so doth meditation the heart with matter for prayer.

Now if it be necessary that thou shouldst consider before duty what thou art to pray, then surely after duty to make reflection on thyself how thou didst pray. The mill may go, and yet no corn be ground. Thus thou mayest possibly confess many sins, and yet thy heart be broken and ground with sorrow for none of them all; thou mayest pray for many graces, and exercise little or no grace in thy praying for them (thy heart being lazy, and putting no weight to the work), without which these spices are not broken, and so send not forth their sweet savour.

Look, therefore, back upon the past duty, and observe narrowly what the behaviour of thy heart was in it; if thou findest it to have been lazy, and drew loose in its gears, or played the truant, by gadding from the work with impertinent thoughts: in a word, if under the power of any sinful distemper, be sure, at thy return to the duty of prayer, that thou chargest this home upon thyself with shame and sorrow. This is the only way to stay God's hand, and stop him from commencing a suit against thee. *If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged*, 1 Cor. xi. 31. *Ubi desinit justitia, incipit judicium*, if we do not justice on ourselves, then God will right himself as well as he can.

Indeed thou canst not in faith pray for pardon of these sins, till thou hast shewn thyself on God's side, by entering thy protest against them. Moses took the right method—he expressed his zeal first for God against Israel's sin of the golden calf, and then fell hard to the work of prayer to God for the pardon of it: he durst not open his lips for them to God, till he had vented his zeal for God, Exod. xxxii. 26. compared with verses 30, 31.—And if he took this course when to intercede for others, much more then shouldst thou when to pray for the pardon of thy own sin.

Again, If upon this review of thy prayer, thou findest thy heart was warm in the work, that thy affections flowed out to God, and his reciprocated love again by unbosoming himself to thee, take heed that no secret pride robs thee of thy new-got treasure; be humble and thankful, remembering they were not thy own wings on which thou wert carried: and also be careful to improve these divine favours, given to encourage thee in the work, as the handfuls of ears of corn let fall for Ruth in the field of Boaz: God would not that they should stop thy mouth, but open it wider, when thou comest again to pray. Did thy heart begin to melt in thy bosom? O now cry for more brokenness of heart. Did thy God cast a kind look on thee? let it set thee a-longing for fuller discoveries of his love. When the beggar sees the rich man putting his hand to his purse, he cries more earnestly.—God is now on the giving hand, and this should embolden thee to ask,

ask, as Abraham, who, as God yielded, made his approaches closer, improving the ground, which he got by inches, for a further advantage to gain more, Gen. xviii. 27.

SECT. II.—Thirdly, The third word of direction is to the Christian, how he should carry himself when the day for extraordinary prayer is over; and this lies in a holy watch that he is to set upon himself.

He that prays and watcheth not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed, but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and rout it up; or him that takes great pains to get money, but no care to lay it up safely when he hath it. If satan cannot beat thee in the field, yet he hopes to have thee at an advantage when thou hast disbanded thy forces, the duty be past, and thou liest in a careless posture. Esau promised himself an opportunity of avenging himself on Jacob: *The days of mourning*, saith he, *for my father are at hand, then will I slay him*, Gen. xxvii. Thus saith satan, The days of mourning and fasting will soon be over, he will not be always upon his knees praying, not always beating down his body with fasting, and then I will fall upon him. Now one of these two ways thy danger is like to come upon thee, either by his wounding thy faith, or slackening thy care in thy obediential walking; and if he can do either, he will give a sad blow to thy prayers.

First, Look therefore after such a day to thy faith.

To pray and not to act faith, is to shoot and not look where the arrow lights; to send a ship with merchandize to sea, and look for no return by the voyage. Thou hast in prayer laboured to overcome God to bear and help thee; now take as much pains to overcome thy heart into a quiet waiting on God, and entire confidence in him.

When Jehoshaphat had ended his public fast, he stands up the next day, and speaks these words to his people, that had joined with him in that solemn duty: *Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*, 2 Chron. xx. 20. So when our blessed Saviour had taught his disciples to pray, then he presseth them entirely to commit themselves and their affairs to that God to whom they prayed, Matt. vi. Truly else extraordinary prayer is but extraordinary prattle; we mock God, and our prayers will mock us, for no fruit will come of them. The hunter may want his supper, though his dogs run fast and mouth it well, if when he comes at the prey he dares not fasten upon it.

Now it is faith's office to fasten on the promise, and take hold of God, without which thy loud cry in prayer is bootless and fruitless.

fruitless. O canst thou trust thy cause with the lawyer, after thy opening it to him? and put thy life into the physician's hand, by following his prescriptions, when thou hast acquainted him with thy disease? and darest thou not venture thy stake in God's hand, after thou hast poured thy soul forth to him in prayer? This is a great folly. Why shouldst thou think omnipotence cannot help, or truth and faithfulness will not? yea, a grievous sin to bring the name of the great God into question by thy unbelief. Yet this our Saviour complains sadly to be the usage that God meets with at their hands from whom he might expect better: *Shall not God avenge his elect, which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.* What greater security can the heart of a saint desire more than the word of a faithful God? yet few to be found, after all their praying for deliverance, that can entirely wait for the same: *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii.

Secondly, Thy obediential walking.

Solomon's advice is, to *keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God*, Eccl. v. 1. Mine at present is, to look to thy foot as thou comest from it. Thou mayest soon do thyself more mischief than all the devils in hell can do thee; they cannot intercept thy prayers, and hinder the happy return of them into thy bosom; but thou mayest soon do it. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*, Isa. lix. 1, 2. This is the whisperer, that separateth chief friends; that makes God, our best friend, stand aloof from his people and their prayers.

Be as careful, Christian, after a fast, as a man would be after strong physic: a cold catched now, a little disorder in thy walking, may be of sad consequence. Remember that as thou hast left thy prayers, so thy vows with the Lord; as thou lookest God should answer the one, so he expects thou shouldst pay the other: Break thy promise to him, and thou dischargest God with thy own hand of any mercy he owes thee; it is folly to think thou canst bind God, and leave thyself free.

CHAP.

CHAP. LI.

Of the Precatory Part of Prayer, with a Fourfold Similitude to be observed in praying for Spiritual and Temporal Mercies.

HAVING dispatched the first branch in the distinction of the kinds of prayer, which held forth the *diversos modos orandi*, from which hath been shewn, That we are to pray with all manner of prayer, *Ejaculatory* and *Composed*, *Solitary* and *Social*, *Private* and *Public*, *Ordinary* and *Extraordinary*; we now take up the second branch, and are to consider *diversam materiam orationis*, the diverse matter of prayer.

And thus, *To pray with all prayer and supplication*, is to encircle the whole matter of prayer within the compass of our duties, and not to leave any thing out of our prayers which God would have taken in. Now this diversity of prayer's matter, some think they may find in the two words of the text, *proseuke* and *deesis*; but I shall not ground my discourse on so nice a criticism.

We will content ourselves with the division which the same apostle makes, Phil. iv. 6. *In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*; and, 1 Thes. v. 17, 18. *Pray without ceasing; in every thing give thanks.* In both which places the whole matter of prayer is comprehended in these two, request and thanksgiving. These two are like the double motion of the lungs, by which they suck in and breathe out the air again. In the petitionary part of prayer, we desire something at God's hands; in thanksgiving, we return praise to him for mercies received from him. I begin with the petitionary part of prayer, and it is threefold, precative, deprecative, imprecative; as for that of intercession, we shall leave it to another place, under these words, *Supplication for all Saints.*

First, *Precatory*, That part of prayer, I mean, wherein the Christian desires of God, in the name of Christ, some good thing of the promise to be given unto him.

Now the good things promised are either spiritual or temporal; those that respect our souls and our eternal salvation, or those which relate to our bodies and temporary estate of them in this life. Such a large field hath the Christian given him for his requests to walk in, for *godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. This earth below to a saint is a land of promise, though not the land that is chiefly

chiefly promised. God hath not promised him heaven, but left him to the wide world to shift for his outward subsistence; he hath not bid them live by faith for their souls, but live by their wits for their bodies. No, he that hath promised to *give them grace and glory*, hath also said, *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Their bill of fare here is provided, as well as their inheritance hereafter.

Now all that I shall do here is to put a compass into your hand, by the help of which you may steer your course safely, when you are bound in your requests to either point of the promise, whether it be for temporal or spiritual mercies. And that I may not run you beside the true channel upon rocks, or sands, I shall touch the needle of that compass I would recommend to your use with the loadstone of the scripture, from which we may gather a four-fold similitude to be used in our request, for spiritual or temporal good things promised; and a three-fold dissimulate also. First, a four-fold similitude.

First, Whether thou prayest for the one or the other, thou must pray in the sense of thy own unworthiness, for thou deservest neither.

When Christ prays for us, he pleads as an advocate for justice, because he paid before he prays, and asks but what he gives the price for; but we, poor creatures, are beggars, and must crave all as pure alms; for the money comes not out of our purse that made the purchase; neither was God the Father bound to engage his Son, or the Son to engage himself in our recovery, who were fallen by forfeiture into the hands of divine justice.

So that mercy is the only plea, thou, who art a sinner, canst make with God. Thou mayest with man stand upon thy desert: thus Jacob claimed his wages at Laban's hand; but when he hath to do with God, he changeth his plea, and sues *sub forma pauperis*, *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewn thy servant*, Gen. xxxii. 10. So Daniel, *We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.* No blessing so great but may be obtained where mercy is the plea, and none so little that we merit. If thou wouldst therefore beg any thing at God's hand, confess thou deservest nothing. Then are we fit to receive great things from God, when we are least in our own eyes; then nearest the crown, when we judge ourselves unworthy of a crust. The proud Pharisee brought his righteousness in his prayer to God, and carried away his sin bound upon him; the Publican brought his sin in his humble confession, and carries away his absolution and justification with him. Thus God crosseth his hands, like Jacob, in giving his blessings.

Secondly, In both thou must pray in faith.

For

For both spiritual and temporal blessings are promised, and therefore thou art to believe, that God will be as faithful and punctual in the performance of the less promises that concern this life, as in the more weighty matters which respect thy eternal happiness in the other; indeed he promiseth spiritual blessings in specie, grace and glory he will give; but temporal enjoyments in *valore*, either in kind or value; *No good thing will he withhold:* And it is fit he should judge when a temporal enjoyment will be good for us, and when it will be better to give some other thing in the lieu of it.

Hence that method in our Lord's Prayer, first to pray, *Thy will be done;* before we pray, *Give us this day our daily bread.* But the seal is the same which ratifies temporal promises with that which he sets to spiritual; his truth and faithfulness are as deeply obliged to perform temporal promises, according to the tenure in which they are made, as to make good the other. And therefore we are as strongly to acquiesce in his care and providence for our protection and provision here, as for our salvation hereafter; else he had done his people wrong, to take them off from an anxious care for those things which he meant not to charge his providence with. Certainly if he bids us, *Be careful for none of these things, but only let our requests be made known to him*, he intends not our loss by our ease, but thereby would have us understand and believe, that he will take the care upon himself, and give us at last a full account of his love and faithfulness in the issue of his providence, how all was disposed for our best advantage.

Thirdly, We must join our endeavours in the use of all means with our prayers, whether they be put up for spiritual or temporal blessings.

Lazy beggars are not to be relieved at our door, 2 Thess. iii. 10. *This we command you, that if any will not work, neither should he eat.* And certainly God will not bid them welcome to his door, whom he would have us deny at ours. We must pray with our hand at the pump, or the ship will sink in sight of our prayers. Is it temporal subsistence thou prayest for? pray and work, or pray and starve. Dost thou think to set God at work, whilst thou sittest with thy hand in thy bosom? These two proverbs in Solomon are observable, *The diligent hand makes rich*, Prov. x. 4. and verse 22. *The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.* He that prays but is not diligent, is not like to be rich; he that is diligent, but prays not, may be rich, but cannot be blessed with his riches; but he that obtains his riches by sincere prayer, in conjunction with his diligence, is rich by the blessing of God, and shall escape the sorrow which the worldling lays up with his money; yea, though he

he gets not an estate, yet he hath the blessing of God, and that makes him rich when there is no money in his purse.

Again, Is it any spiritual blessing thou prayest for? Wouldst thou have more knowledge in the things of God? think not it will drop into thy mind without endeavour. Daniel studied as well as prayed. His eyes were one while on the book, and another while lift up to heaven in prayer, Dan. ix. 2. *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*, Dan. xii. 4. It is got by running from one means to another; as the merchant's ship takes in some of her freight at one port, some at another, so the Christian gets some light in a sermon, some in a conference, some in one duty, some in another. And he that takes up one duty, but through sloth neglects the rest, saves but his pains to lose his gains. Sometimes God is found in this duty, and sometimes in that, on purpose to keep up the credit of all, that we wave none.

Fourthly, Our request for both must be spiced with thanksgiving.

Let your requests be made known with thankgiving, Phil. iv. and 1 Thes. v. *In every thing give thanks.* Art thou praying for the love and favour of God? Bless God thou art where it may be obtained, and not in hell, past hope or help. Is it health thou desirest? Bless God for life; *It is the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed.* No condition on earth can be of so sad a colour, in which there may not some eye of white, some mixture of mercy be found interwoven. *Puræ tenebræ*, utter darkness, without any stricture of mercy, is found in hell alone.

Come not, therefore, to pray, till you know also what to praise God for. As God hath an open hand to give, so he hath an open eye to see who comes to his door, and to discern between the thankful beggar, and the unthankful. Will God give more to him, on whom all is lost that he hath formerly bestowed? Indeed he doth do good to the evil and thankful; but it is not a gracious return of their prayers, but an act of his common providence, of which they will have little comfort when he brings the bounty of his providence in judgment against them, to aggravate their sins, and increase their torment.

CHAP.

CHAP. LII.

Contains a Three-fold Dissimilitude and Difference to be made in Framing our Requests for Spiritual and Temporal Mercies.

NOW follows a three-fold dissimilitude which we are to observe in framing our requests for spiritual and temporal mercies.

First, Temporal mercies are chiefly to be desired for the sake of spiritual; but spiritual mercies for themselves, and not for temporal advantages.

1. Temporal chiefly to be desired for the sake of spiritual blessings, and not their own.

The traveller desires a horse, not for itself so much as for the convenience of his journey he is to go. Thus the Christian, when praying for temporal things, should desire them as helps in his way and passage to heaven. I do not say it is unlawful to desire life, health, and other comforts of this life, for the suitableness that these have to our natural affections, and to supply our outward necessities; but to desire them only for this, is low and base—it is the mere cry of the creature; the ravens thus cry, and all the beasts of the field seek their meat of God; that is, they desire the preservation of their lives, and make their moan when they want that which should support them. And these creatures being made for no higher end than the enjoyment of these particular narrow good things, they observe the law of their creation.

But thou art an intellectual being, and by thy immortal soul, which is a spiritual substance, thou art as near a-kin to the angels in heaven, as thou art by thy meaner bodily part to the beasts; yea, allied to God thy maker, not only made by him, as they were, but for him, which they are not. He is thy chief good, and therefore thou infinitely dishonourest him, and thyself too, if thou canst sit down short of him in thy desires. *Nihil bonum sine summo bono*, nothing should be good to thee without God, who is thy chief good. *Non placent tibi mea, sine meeum; nec tua mihi, sine tecum;* thus shouldst thou say and pray, O Lord, as all my gifts and services do not please thee, except with them I give thee myself; so none of these gifts of thy bounty can content me, except with them thou wilt bestow thyself on me.

Now this regular motion of the heart in praying for temporals is to be found only in those, whose inward wheels (I mean powers

powers and faculties) are set right by the hand of divine grace. Man in his corrupt state is like Nebuchadnezzar at grass, he hath a beast's heart, that craves no more than the satisfaction of his sensual appetite; but when renewed by grace, then his understanding returns to him, by which he is enabled, in praying for temporals, to elevate his desires to a higher pitch and nobler end.

Doth sick David pray that some further time may be added to the lease of his temporal life? it is not out of fond love to this world, or the carnal entertainments of it, but to prepare himself the better for another life; *O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more*, Psal. xxxix. 13. Is he comforted with hopes of a longer stay here? it is not any of this world's carnal pleasures that kindles this joy in his holy breast, but the advantage that thereby he shall have for praising God in the land of the living. *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God*, Psal. xlii. 11.

The saint hath as quick a sense to taste the sweetness of a temporal mercy as another; but his heart being spiritual, and so acquainted with higher enjoyments, he desires, with Luther, that God would not put him off with these shells of blessings. O how few thus pray for temporals! most are but progging for their lusts, while praying from them, James iv. 3. *Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* One is sick, and prays for health, that he may be again at his pots or harlots: another is childless, and he would have an heir, to uphold the pride and grandeur of his house, but not the increase of Christ's family in the world; a third would be a greater man in the world, and for what? may be, that having more power, he may take the fuller revenge on his enemies, that now are out of his reach; and others that bring not their sacrifice with so evil a mind, yet look no higher than their carnal contentment in the enjoyment they would have, as appears by their carriage in the use of it.

Thus the mariners in a sea-storm, Psal. cvii. *They cry unto the Lord in their trouble;* and when they have their life given them, as they desire, *then they are glad, because they are quiet;* and God hears no more of them, now their turn is served—a plain evidence that they were selfish and carnal in their prayer for this mercy, because they improve it not for a spiritual end; which makes the Psalmist break forth into that holy option and vote, ver. 31. *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!* But much more abominable is it to pray for spiritual mercies for the sake of some temporal advantage we hope to have by them: Thus Simon Magus desired the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that he might be a man of fame and name. And do not some labour to bring

bring the gospel to town, as an expedient to mend their takings in their shop; others pray for the assistances of the spirit, and project their own praise by the means, basely perverting those holy things to secular advantages? O horrid baseness! as if one should desire a prince's robe to stop an oven with it. This is, as Austin saith, *Uti Deo, ut fruamur mundo;* to make God the stirrup, and the creature our saddle.

Those spiritual blessings which are intrinsical to our happiness, and indispensably necessary to our salvation, these we are to pray for, with an undeniable importunity; such are pardon of sin, the love and favour of God, and the sanctifying graces of the spirit; to be cold or indifferent in our prayers for these, is a great wickedness.

The promise will bear us out in our greatest importunity, Psal. cv. 4. *Seek ye the Lord and his strength, seek his face evermore;* Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely. Tantum possumus in negotio Religionis, quantum volumus.* Nothing loseth us these mercies more, than weak wishings, and faint desires of them. But our prayers for temporal blessings must be with a latitude of submission to the will of God, because they are promised conditionally. The promise is the foundation of our faith, the superstructure therefore of our prayers must not jet beyond it. This was Israel's sin, *Who shall give us flesh to eat?* Num. xi. 18. God had indeed promised to feed them in the wilderness, but not to give them every dish their wanton palate craved; and therefore when God's bill of fare contents them not, but they cry for flesh—they have their desire, but sour sauce with it; for, *while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them*, Psal. lxxviii. 31. Thus they were fed for the slaughter by the meat they inordinately lusted after.

O take heed of peremptory prayers for any temporal enjoyment, for thereby thou beggest but a rod for thy own back.—Rachel must have children, or else she dies; and she at last hath two, but dies in travail of the latter. It was a smart saying of one to his wife, who passionately desired a son, and had one at last, but none of the wisest; *Wife*, saith he, *thou hast long passionately desired a boy, and now thou hast one that will always be a boy.* God may justly set some print of his anger on that mercy which he answers our peremptory prayers with. Why, alas, must we needs have that which we must needs lose, or shall not enjoy while we have it?

Thirdly, Those spiritual blessings which are intrinsical to the saint's happiness, are to be prayed for with boundless desires; not, Give me this much grace, and I will trouble thee for no more: no, God gives a little grace, not to stop our mouth, but to

open it wider for more. Yet, alas, how unreasonably reasonable are most in this particular? so much holiness contents them as will, like salt, keep them from putrifying in gross sins, that they be not unsavoury to the nostrils of their neighbours, or as will save them from the lash of a tormenting conscience; like school-boys, that care for no more of their lesson than will save a whipping. Alas, this is not to desire it at all; it is thy credit abroad, and thy quiet within, thou desirest, and the other but to help thee to these.

He that knows the true worth of grace, thinks he hath never enough till satisfied with it in glory. Paul had more than many of his brethren, yet prays, and presseth as hard after more, as if he had none at all, Phil. iii. 13, 14. But in temporal enjoyments, we are to stint our desires, and not let out all the sails of our affections when praying for them. A gracious heart is as unwilling to have too much of these, as afraid of having too little; *Give me neither poverty nor riches, but food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. I think not a saint but could cheerfully say, Amen to this prayer of Agur; I am sure he ought. That house is best seated, which stands neither on the bleak top of the hill, nor on the wet bottom. The nature of these temporal good things is enough to convince any wise man, that the mean is best. They are not the Christian's freight, but his ballast, and therefore are to be desired, to poise, not load the vessel; they are not his portion, heaven is that, but his spending money in his journey thither; and what traveller that is wise desires to carry any greater charge about him than will pay for his quarters?

CHAP. LIII.

Of Deprecatory Prayer in Particular; how we are to Deprecate Evil, in Five Particulars.

THE second branch in the petitionary part of prayer is, Deprecation, wherein we desire of God, in the name of Christ, the removal of some evil felt or feared, inflicted or threatened.—So that evil is the object of deprecation. Here I shall briefly point at the evils to be deprecated, and how we are to frame our requests to God in deprecating of them. All evil is comprehended in these two, *Sin* or *suffering*.

First, Sin: This indeed is the evil of evils, against which chiefly we are to let fly the arrows of our prayers.

This

This is the only thing that is intrinsically evil in its own nature, suffering is rather evil to us than itself; and our sufferings have both their being and malignity from the evil of our sins; had there been no sin, there had been no suffering; where that ceaseth, this is not to be found. No sorrow in heaven, because no sin. These, like twins, live and die together. *If thou dost evil, sin lies at the door;* that is, if thou dost the evil of sin, prepare to meet with the evil of suffering. Now, in sin, two things are to be deprecated, guilt and filth.

First, Guilt: This is the proper effect and consequent of every sin.

Whenever any sin is committed, there is guilt contracted, whereby the creature becomes obnoxious to the wrath of God; and this guilt wears not off by length of time, but continues bound upon the sinner, till God, by an act of pardoning mercy, absolves him; so that though the act of sin be transient, and passeth away as soon as the fact is committed, yet the creature is in the bond of his iniquity—held with this chain of guilt as a prisoner to divine justice, till he, by faith and repentance, sues out his pardon; even as a felon, who may be is not presently after the fact taken and brought into judgment, yet abides a debtor to the law, whereever he is, till he can obtain his pardon. Now need I speak any thing, to set out the dismal and deplorable condition of a soul under guilt, thereby to provoke you to pray for the removal of it? There is no mountain so heavy as the guilt of the least sin is to an awakened conscience; better thy house were haunted with devils, than thy soul with guilt.

If thy conscience tells thee thou art in the bond of iniquity, thou canst not but be in the gall of bitterness; they are joined together, Acts viii. 23. Guilt is a burden, which the sinner can neither stand under, nor throw off; one compares him to a beast stung with a gad-fly, fain would he run from his pain, but still he finds it in him. This lies throbbing in his soul like a thorn in the flesh, and will not let him rest by day, nor sleep by night; he turns himself on his bed, as Regulus in his barrel stuck with nails, not an easy place that he can find in it. This makes him afraid of every disease that comes to town, pox or plague, lest it should arrest him, and bring him by death to judgment; his guilt makes him think every bush a man, and every man a messenger of divine vengeance to slay him. The mark that God set upon guilty Cain, Gen. iv. 15. is by many interpreters conceived to be a trembling heart, made visible by a ghastly countenance, and discomposed carriage of his outward man: And that passage, verse 12. *A fugitive and vagabond thou shalt be in the earth,* the septuagint reads thus, *thou shalt be sighing and trembling in*

the earth. No convulsion fit so distorts the body, as sin doth the soul.

Now, in this prayer against guilt, and for pardon, observe these particulars: 1. Pray with a deep sense and sorrow for thy sins.

The worst nonsense in prayer is of the heart, when that hath no sense of the sin he deprecates, or of the mercy he desires.—Nothing more hardens the heart of God against our prayer, than the hardness of our heart in prayer; and, on the contrary, no such way to melt God into pity, as for our own hearts to dissolve into sorrow. He that would have us *give wine to the sad of heart*, Prov. xxxi. saves this vessel, the promise, I mean, of pardoning mercy, which holds the sweetest wine in God's cellar, *to revive the heart of the contrite ones*, Isa. lvii. A tear in the eye for sin adorns the creature more than a jewel in his ear, and his prayer more than all the embroidery of expressions in it can do. While the publican smote his own breast, he got into God's bosom, and carried a pardon home with him. Will Christ drop his blood to procure thy pardon, who can shed no tears for thy sin? The truth is, here lies the difficulty of the work, not how to move God, but how to get the sinner's own heart melted. It is harder to get sin felt by the creature, than the burden, when felt, removed by the hand of a forgiving God.

Never was a tender hearted chirurgeon more willing to take up the vein, and bind up the wound of his fainting patient when he hath bled enough, than God is by his pardoning mercy to ease the troubled spirit of a mourning penitent. It is one rule he gives his servants in their practice upon their spiritual patients, to beware of making too great evacuation in the souls of poor sinners by excessive humiliation, lest thereby the spirit of their faith be too much weakened; 2 Cor. ii. 7. *Sufficient to such a man is this punishment*, &c. *So that he ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*

Secondly, Justify and clear God in all the expressions of his displeasure for thy sins.

Thou dost perhaps carry the marks of his anger on thy flesh in some outward judgment, or, which is worse, the terrors of the Lord have taken hold of thy soul, and, like poisoned arrows, lie burning in thy conscience, where they stick; acknowledge him just, and all this that is come upon thee *less than thy iniquities have deserved*, Ezra ix. The way to escape the fatal stroke of his axe, is to kiss the block; clear his justice, and fear not but his mercy will save thy life.

Thou hast a promise on thy side, *If their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then*

then will I remember my covenant, Lev. xxvi. 41, 42. David took this course and sped, Psal. li. *I acknowledge my transgressions*, ver. 3.; and why is he so willing to spread his sin in his confession before the Lord? see ver. 4. *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest:* He would have all the world know, that God did him no wrong in the judgments that came upon him; he takes all the blame upon himself.

Thirdly, Take heed thou prayest not with a reservation; be sure thou renouncest what thou wouldst have God remit.

God will never remove the guilt so long as thou entertainest the sin. What prince will pardon his treason that means to continue a traitor? It is desperate folly to desire God to forgive what thou intendest to commit. Thou hadst as good speak out, and ask leave to sin with impunity; for God knows the language of thy heart, and needs not thy tongue for an interpreter.

Some princes have misplaced their high favours to their heavy cost, as the emperor Leo Armenius, who pardoned that monster of ingratitude, Michael Balbus, and was the same night in which he was delivered out of prison murdered by him. But the great God is subject to no mistake in his government; never got hypocrite a pardon in the disguise of a saint. He will call thee by thy own name, though thou comest to him in the semblance of a penitent; *Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam*, said the prophet.—Hypocrisy is too thin a veil to blind the eyes of the Almighty. Thou mayest put thy own eyes out, so as not to see him; but thou canst never blind his eyes that he should not see thee. And as long as God loves himself, he must needs hate the hypocrite; and if he hates him, surely he will not pardon him. The pardoned soul and the sincere are all one, Psal. xxxii. 2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Fourthly, Make Christ thy plea.

Pardon of sin is indeed a favour not known in the first covenant: Do, and Live; Sin, and Die, were all its contents; no room left for an after-game by that law. The gospel-covenant is our *Tabula post naufragium*, the only plank by which we may recover the shore after our miserable wreck. This covenant is founded in Christ, who hath upon agreement with his Father undertook to answer the demands of the law, and happily performed what he undertook; upon which the gospel is preached, and pardon promised to all that repent and believe on him; *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour*, Acts v. 31. *Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 25. As, therefore, when Christ intercedes for poor sinners, he carries his blood with him, and pre-

sents it to God, for the price of that forgiveness he desires for them, so thou mayest bring the same blood in the hand of thy faith, when thou prayest for the pardon of thy sins; for, *without blood, there is no remission*, Heb. ix.

This is the more to be heeded, because many, out of ignorance, and some from a corrupt principle, apply themselves in their prayers to the absolute mercy of God for pardon: Ask them, why they hope to be forgiven, and they will tell you, God is good, and they hope he will be merciful, seeing his nature is so gracious. But, alas, they forget that he is just as well as merciful, and mercy will not act but with the consent of his justice: Now the only salve for the justice of God is the satisfaction of Christ. *God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*, Rom. iii. 26. So that to desire God to forgive thee thy sin, without the intervening of Christ's satisfaction, is to desire God to be unjust, and pardon thee with the loss of his own honour: and how welcome thou art like to be, that comest to him on such an errand, is easy to think.

Fifthly and lastly, Take no denial in this thy request, but pray for it with unwearied importunity.

It is a mercy thou canst not want; it is more necessary than thy very being—better never to be, than ever to be unpardoned. Think but a little on thy dismal condition, while guilt is not taken off, and thy pardon not obtained, and it is impossible that thou shouldst be a cold faint suitor for this mercy of mercies.—Know, then, while unpardoned, thou art God's prisoner: all the plagues written in the law cleave as close to thee as thy girdle to thy loins; every moment thou mayest fear they should take hold upon thee, as thou walkest in thy house, sittest at thy table, or liest in thy bed.

Where canst thou be safe, who hast God thine enemy? Can the bread resist him that eats it? or the tree withstand the axe of the feller? Truly no more canst thou the wrath of an avenging God. Is it not he that holds the stoutest devils in chains? He who can kindle a fire in thy own bones and bosom, and make thee consume, like lime, with the inward burning of thy self-tormenting thoughts? Is he not a righteous God, whose justice binds him, in the distribution of justice, to be exact according to the sinner's demerit? Is he not the everlasting God? Not a sorry creature, who may threaten thee to-day, and be dead himself to-morrow; but eternity itself, who ever lives to take vengeance on sinners, out of whose hands thou canst not escape by dying.

In earthly courts, when the man dies, his cause dies with him, because out of their jurisdiction, and past their summons: But

at

at death, thou fallest into the hands of the living God, who will pursue his quarrel with thee in the other world also. No sooner is thy soul abandoned of thy body, and turned out of its earthly house, but it shall return to God to receive its doom. Neither shall thy body long rest in the grave where it is earthed, but be called forth to share with the soul in torment, whose partner it had been in sin. The parting of these at death to a guilty soul is sad enough, but their meeting again at the great day of judgment will be much more dismal: For husband and wife, that have joined in some bloody murder, to be attached and sent to several prisons in order to their trial, must needs fill them with fear and terror of their approaching judgment: but much more dreadful is it to them when brought forth to receive their sentence, and suffer at the same gibbet together. At death, the sinner's body is disposed of to one prison, his soul to another, and both to meet again at the great day of assize for the world, then to be sent by the final sentence of the Judge to everlasting flames in hell's fiery furnace, where, after the poor wretch hath experienced a thousand millions of years the weight of God's just vengeance, he shall find himself no nearer the end of his misery than he was the first day wherein his torment commenced. Then death will be desired as a favour, but it shall flee from him, his misery being both intolerable and interminable.

By this time, I suppose, a pardon will be thought worth thy having, and too good to be lost by sluggish sleepy praying for it. When, therefore, thou hast chased thy soul thus into a sense of the indispensable necessity of this mercy, then take up a holy resolution to lay thy siege close to the throne of grace, and never to rise till God opens the gates of his mercy to thee. As it is so necessary thou canst not want it, so thou hast the promise of a faithful God that thou shalt not miss it, upon the timely and sincere seeking of it. *If we confess, he is just and faithful to forgive.* Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the Almighty may be overcome. Manasseh, who could not on his throne, when he sinned and stouted it out against God, defend himself from the justice of God, yet in his dungeon and fetters, greatly humbling himself before the Lord, obtained his mercy.—So Israel, *When he sinned he died, but when he spake trembling, then he was exalted,* Hos. xiii. 1.

CHAP. LIV.

How to Deprecate the Defiling Power of Sin.

THE second thing in sin to be deprecated is, the defiling power of it.

He that desires not to be purged from the filth of sin, prays in vain to be eased of the guilt. If we love the work of sin, we must like the wages also. A false heart could be willing to have his sin covered, but the sincere desires his nature may be cured and cleansed. David begged a clean heart, as well as a quiet conscience, Psal. ii. *Blot out all mine iniquities, create in me a clean heart, O God;* verse 10. he desires water to purify his heart, as well as blood to sprinkle and pacify his conscience.—Now, in framing thy requests as to this, observe these particulars.

First, Be sure thou comest with a deep abhorrence of thyself for that sin-filth which cleaves to thee.

This is called, *Knowing the plague of a man's own heart,* 1 Kings viii. 38. when a creature is affected and afflicted with the sense of his corruptions, as if he had so many plague-sores running upon him, and loathes himself for them, as much as Job did for the boils and sores with which his body was covered.—The Leper was commanded, in order to his cure, to put himself into a mourner's habit, Lev. xiii. 43. *His garments shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering on his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.* Why all this, but to express the deep sense of his sin and misery? Look upon the saints in scripture, and you shall find this was their way to abase themselves in their prayers, with the greatest self-abhorrence that was possible; penitent David takes the fool, yea, the beast unto himself—he knows not how to speak bad enough of himself; *So foolish was I and ignorant, even as a beast before thee,* Psal. lxxiii. 22. Holy Job cries out, *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,* chap. lxiii. 6. Others blush, and are as much ashamed to be seen in the presence of God, as one that had fallen into some puddle or lake would be in that pickle to come before his prince.

Secondly, In praying against thy lusts, look thy heart goes with thy tongue.

In nothing do our hearts put more cheats upon us than in our prayers, and in no requests more than in those which are levelled against our lusts. That is least intended sometimes which is most pretended. And truly we had need be well acquainted with ourselves, before we can find the bottom of our designs. Austin confesseth,

confesseth, when he was a young man, and forced, by conviction in his conscience, to pray, that God would deliver him out of the bondage of his lust, yet the secret whispers of his heart were, *Non adhuc Domine, Not yet, Lord;* he was afraid God should take him at his word.

Thus the hypocritical Jews first *set up their idols in their hearts, and then enquired of the Lord*, Ezek. xiv. 1.; this is a great wickedness. And it were a just, though a heavy plague, for God to answer such according to the secret votes of their hearts, by giving them up to those lusts which they inwardly crave. When Paul begs prayers for himself, to embolden them in their requests for him, he assures them of his sincerity: *Pray for us, for we trust that we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly*, Heb. xiii. 18. as if he had said, I durst not make you my spokesmen to God, if my heart did check me that I did secretly comply with any sin, and did not mean in all things to live honestly. How then canst thou have the face to go thyself to God on an errand, to desire that of him which thou would be loath to have?

Quest. But how may we come to know whether our hearts are sincere or hypocritical, in praying against the defiling power of sin?

Answ. First, Observe whether thy prayer be uniform, laid against all sin, one lust as well as another.

Sincerity makes not here a balk, and there a furrow, is not hot against one lust, and cold against another, but goes thorough-stitch in the work; *It hates every false way*, Psal. cxix. 104. It shoots its arrows at the whole flock, and singles not this sin out in its prayers, which he would have taken, and that left; *Let no iniquity have dominion over me*, ver. 132.; he knows if all his chains were knocked off, and only one left upon him, he should be as true a slave to satan as if all the others were still on.

He prays not against one sin, because a great one, and pleads for another, because it is a little one. The dust and rubbish help to fill up the wall as well as the great stones; little sins contribute as well as great, to make up the partition wall between God and the creature: every little speck blemisheth the garment, and every penny increaseth the sum: So little sins defile the soul, and swell the sinner's account; therefore he prays against them, as well as the other. David, who desired to be kept back from *presumptuous sins*, did also beg to *be cleansed from secret sins*, Psal. xix.

Secondly, Observe whether thy heart stand firmly resolved to renounce that sin thou prayest God to subdue.

The sincere Christian binds himself, as well as labours, to engage God against his sin. Indeed that prayer is a blank which hath

hath not a vow in it, *Thou hast heard my vows*, Psal. lxi. 5. i. e. his prayers, which are always to be put up with vows. Is it a mercy thou prayest him to give? If sincere, thou wilt vow to praise him for it, and serve him with it. Is it a sin thou prayest against? Except thou jugglest with God, thou wilt vow as well as pray against it. *Remove from me the way of lying*, Psal. cxix. 29 there is David's deprecation; now mark his promise and his vow, *I have chosen the way of truth, thy judgments I have laid before me*, ver. 30. While he prays against the way of lying, he chooseth the way of truth.

Thirdly, Observe thirdly, Whether thou art vigorous in the use of all appointed means to mortify the lust thou prayest against.

Resolutions in the time of prayer are good, when backed with strenuous endeavours, else but a blind for a false heart to cover itself with. Sampson did not only pray he might be avenged on his enemies, but set his hands to the pillars of the house. He that hath bid thee pray against thy lust, hath bid thee shun the occasion of it: *Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house, lest thou give thy honour unto others*, Prov. v. 8. that is, lest thou be hooked into her by the occasion. Thus Joseph, that he might not be drawn to lie with his mistress, would not stay alone in the room with her, Gen. xxxix. So Prov. xxiii. 20. *Be not amongst wine bibbers;* and, ver. 31. *Look not on the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup*, because looking may breed liking.

Now art thou conscientiously careful to keep out of the way that leads to the sin, and to shun the occasion that might betray thee into the hands of that lust thou prayest against? Certainly, he that would not have his house blown up, will not set his gunpowder in the chimney-corner.

Again, God, who bids thee pray against thy lusts, commands thee also to take the sword of his word, by meditating on it, and applying it close to thy heart and conscience, to cut them down, and get victory over them. Thus did David, he *hid the word in his heart, that he might not sin.*

Thou prayest against covetousness, O that God would rid thy heart of it: Well, what dost thou towards thy own delivery from this base lust? Here is a sword put into thy hand, whose edge is sharp enough to cut and kill it, if thou wilt lay it on in good earnest. This sets forth the vanity of the creature, how base and vile a sin covetousness is; takes away all occasion of inordinate desires and cares for the world by many sweet promises, what he hath laid up in another world for us, and what care in his providence he will take for us in this life. *Let your conversation be without*

without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, Heb. xiii.

Now what use dost thou make of this weapon? dost thou strengthen thy assent to the truth of these promises? Labour to affect thy heart with the sweetness of them, and then draw forth this sword to defend thyself against this lust, when the enemy comes with a temptation to it? if so, thou wert sincere in thy prayer. A false heart contents itself with a few idle lazy prayers against his lust, but is afraid to use this sword against it; or if he doth, he strikes with the back, and not the edge; or lays his stroke so favourably on, that it shall not much endanger the life of his sin: Like a mountebank, that will be sure to make no worse wound in his side than a balsam will in a day or two cure.

Now to raise thy heart to the greater vehemency in praying against thy lusts, labour deeply to affect thy heart, what a fearful plague it is (indeed of all other incomparably the greatest) for a soul to be given up of God to the power of his lusts. This consideration, if any, will make thee lay close siege to God, and set upon him with the utmost importunity, knowing thou art an undone creature, if thou speedest not in thy errand. When God intends to smite home, he takes his aim at the heart, he gives the creature over to his lust: Thus he hardened Pharaoh to a final obstinacy, Exod. ix. 14. *I will send all my plagues on thy heart.* They did not only light upon the beasts and fruits of the field, or upon their own bodies, but chiefly on their hearts and spirits, hardening them to obstinacy to their destruction. And this indeed is to send all plagues in one; other plagues, that reach only to estate or body, are consistent with the love and favour of God; he can smite the body, and smile on the soul; blast the man's estate, and bless him with spiritual riches; make him poor in the world, and rich in faith. But he that is given up to his lusts is abhorred of God.

A saint may be delivered up to satan, *ut lictori*, to correct him, for the destruction of the flesh, and saving of his spirit; but it is the brand of a reprobate to be delivered up to satan, *ut domino*, that his lusts may have full power over him; which judiciary act of God portends the sinner's destruction, Deut. ii. 30. 2 Thess. ii. 11. Outward plagues are sometimes in the sinner's mouth as a bridle to restrain him from sin, but this is a spur that makes them more mad after their lusts; it takes away the sense of sin, and then the wretch plays the devil—nothing will stop him in his way, but to hell he will go, over ditch and hedge.

Pray against the power of thy lusts, as a branch of the gospel-covenant.

God

God is not to be bound by the first covenant to stir a foot for man's help. Man went of his own accord over to the devil's quarters. He deserted God, and chose a new Lord; and in his hands God might have left him, without offering him any help for his rescue. It was not any tie that man had upon God, by the covenant of nature, which obliged him, but his own free grace that moved him to undertake his recovery. And this he doth by making a new covenant on the ruins of the old.

So that whoever will pray against his lusts with success, must first become a covenanter with God, by accepting the terms upon which God in it offers to save us from our sins—and they are faith and repentance; when the soul doth thus face about from his sins to close with Christ, then he becomes a covenanter with God, and may with faith call God into the field for his help against this huge host of lusts and devils that come against him. God's chariots are his, the whole militia of heaven is engaged in his quarrel. *Sin shall not have dominion over you;* and why? *For you are not under the law, but under grace,* Rom. vi. 14.; that is, you are not under the law-covenant made with Adam, but under the gospel-covenant made with Christ, and through him with all believers.

O how many prayers against sin are lost, for want of well understanding this grand notion of the gospel! A great cry is made, and complaint by many of their sins to God, and victory over them pretended to be desired; yet they live and grow stronger every day than others, and what is the reason? Alas! they stand not in a federal relation to God, neither take they any care how to get into it. Will a prince raise an army to fight for he knows not who? Indeed, if his subjects or allies be in distress, he is ready to step in for their succour; but strangers cannot expect he should do this for them. Leagues are made before assistance desired. God first promiseth to bring *Israel under the bond of his covenant,* Ezek. xx. 37.; and then, ver. 41. that *he will accept them with their sweet savour.*

David knew this very well, that the carnal world are abandoned by God, to be trod under the foot of every lust; and therefore, when he prays God would order his steps in his word, and let no iniquity have dominion over him, he desires it as a favour peculiar to those that were near and dear to him, *Deal with me as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name,* Psalm cxix. 132.

Pray not only against the power of sin, but for the power of holiness also.

A naughty heart may pray against his sins, not out of any inward enmity to them, or love to holiness, but because they are troublesome guests to his conscience. Believe it for certain truth,

truth, his zeal is false that seems hot against his sin, but is key-cold to holiness. A city is rebellious that keeps their rightful prince out, though it receives not his enemy in: Nay, the devil needs not fear, but at last he shall make that soul his garrison again, out of which for a while he seems shut, so long as it stands empty, and is not filled with solid grace, Mat. xii. 44, 45. What indeed should hinder satan's re-entry into that house which hath none in it to keep him out?

CHAP. LV.

How to Deprecate the Evil of Suffering, Temporal and Eternal.

THE second object of deprecatory prayer is, suffering: sin brought suffering into the world. Sin is indeed the elder twin, but suffering stayed not long after it, for it took it by the heel, presently arresting Adam upon the very place where he committed his trespass, and ever since follows it as close as the shadow doth the body. It leaves not the saint till death parts him and his sin, but pursues the wicked, with their sins, into the other world also. So that this distribution of suffering into temporal and eternal shall content us at present, they being comprehensive of all the miseries which sin hath brought upon the sons of men.

Now my work in this place shall be only to direct the Christian how to frame his prayer, in deprecating the one and the other also.

First, Temporal sufferings, how the Christian is to deprecate and pray against; which I shall do two ways.

1. Negatively, how he is not.
2. Affirmatively, how he may and should pray against them.

SECT. I.—First, Negatively.

The Christian is not to pray for an immunity from all temporal sufferings; there is no foundation for such a prayer in the promise; and what God thinks not fit to promise, we must not be bold to ask. Temporal promises are to be understood, saith Melanchton, *cum exceptione crucis*. God had one Son without sin, but he will have none in this life without suffering. John writes himself, *Your brother and companion in tribulation*, Rev. i. 9. He hath too high an opinion of himself, that would have God lead him dry-shod on a fair causey to heaven, while he sees the rest of his brethren march through thick and thin to the same place;

place ; for who thinks he needs not this thorn-hedge of suffering, to keep him as well as others from wandering out of his way to glory. The rod and ferula are not more needful among children at school, than suffering is to the saints while in their minority here on earth. If thou wert come to that ripeness of ingenuity as to have worn off all thy childishness, thou shouldst stay here no longer under the lash ; but while thou art subject to sin, thou must submit to his disciplinary rod. Valetudinarious bodies can as well spare food as physic : and saints in this their crazy state may as well live without ordinances as without sufferings.

In a word, to pray absolutely against suffering, is to desire one of the greatest punishments on this side hell. When God said, *I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom*, Hos. iv. 9. he meant them no good by sparing his rod. If we count him an unwise father, that when he puts his child to school, indents with his master not to whip him ; surely much more folly were it in thee to desire God to privilege thee from all suffering.

Secondly, Affirmatively, in these particulars following.

First, Deprecate the vindictive justice and wrath of God in all temporal sufferings.

Thus Jeremiah shapes his prayer, Jer x. 24. *O Lord, correct me, but in judgment, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.* And, chap. xvii. 17. *Be not thou a terror to me ; thou art my hope in the day of evil.* He declines not suffering, but deprecates wrath, as if he had said, Let trouble come, but not with this message, to tell me that thou art mine enemy ; shoot thy darts, my breast is open to receive them, but let them not be envenomed arrows, headed with thy punitive justice.

Without this sting, all suffering is innocent and harmless ; but if the creature does fear (though without just cause) they are shot out of justice's bow, then they drink up his spirits, and exanimate him presently. *When thou with rebukes dost correct a man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth*, Psal. xxxix. That holy woman, 1 Kings xvii. 18. was not so much distressed for her son's death, as for the reflection this sad providence made upon her conscience, *Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and slay my son?* Thou canst not therefore be too passionately importunate in deprecating this.

Secondly, Deprecate the snare and temptation that suffering may expose thee to.

Satan commonly finds it easy to make some sinful impression upon the saint when he is hot, and his *heart made soft* (as Job phraseth it) *in the furnace of affliction.* He is a rare Christian in whom the stream of his grace runs clear upon such roiling.

Job

Job was a man of a thousand, God's non-such, Job i. *None like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man;* yet bewrayed many weaknesses in his troubles, and would have done more, had not God, in pity to his poor servant, taken the devil off, before he had quite run him down.

Christ teacheth us to pray against suffering, under the notion of temptation. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;* that is, Let us not be led into sin when we fall into suffering; let us not fall into thy hand and satan's together.—This discovers a holy frame of heart, to be more tender of our conscience than skin; not so much to fear affliction from God, as lest in it we should behave ourselves unseemly and unholily towards God. Agur is not so much ashamed to beg, as afraid to steal, and so take the name of his God in vain; upon which account, he chiefly prays against poverty, Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

There is nothing lost by serving God first, and preferring his honour before our own private interest, in our prayers. Self-denial is the best self-seeking; for, by neglecting ourselves for God's sake, we oblige him to take the care of us upon himself; and he is the only happy man who hath his stake laid up in God's hands.

Thirdly, Deprecate the excess of suffering, that thou beest not over-laden, thy burden too heavy for thy back.

This is promised, that thou mayest therefore present it in faith, Jer. xlvi. 28. *I will make a full end of the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure.* The patient doth not entrench upon the physician's art, by desiring him to proportionate his dose according to the weakness of his body, if when he hath done this, he acquiesceth in his skill and faithfulness for the same.

Indeed to desire God to consider our weakness, and then not to rely on his wisdom and care, but continue jealous and suspicious, or to murmur at his prescriptions, as if the physic he gives were too churlish and strong, this makes a dishonourable reflection upon God. Sometimes the physician exceeds the proportion that his fearful patient thinks strong enough, but withal tells him, You are not so weak as you take yourself to be, your body may bear so many grains more in the composition: leave me to my art, and all shall be well.

Thus God, who knows our frame exactly, deals with his people, and is highly pleased to see them satisfied with what he orders them out, Job. i. 22. *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly;* he did not impute folly to God: so the Septuagint reads it. The meaning of the place is, Job did not make any unworthy reflection upon God for the evils he suffered by his providence, as if any thing were wanting in his care or wisdom:

like

like some rash physician, who fails either in timing or tempering his physic.

Fourthly, Thou mayest not only deprecate those evils in thy afflictions, but also pray believingly for a happy issue out of them all.

The darkest lane of suffering shall to the saint have a lightsome end, and all, we say, is well that ends well. *We have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that he is very pitiful*, James v. This is that which God so fully intends to all his saints' troubles, that he takes pleasure in thinking of it before hand; *I know the thoughts I have toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace*, Jer. xxix. 11. And that petition comes in a happy time to court, which finds the king thinking of the very business it prays for.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The second kind of suffering is eternal in hell.

This is the centre in which all the lines of sin and misery meet, the common shoal into which they all disgorge themselves, as rivers do their streams into the vast ocean: and as rivers, when they are fallen into the sea, lose their several names into one that comprehends them all, the ocean; so all the evils of this life, when resolved into this, forget their private names, sickness, pains, poverty, &c. and are called hell; not that these are all formally and literally there, but virtually, in that the torment of the damned doth not only amount to, but beyond expression exceeds, them all.

As in heaven there is no belly-cheer, yet a feast; no silks and sattins worn, yet all in glorious robes; as silver is in gold, and gold in a jewel, so all these are in heaven, because that which is of infinite more value and worth than such things as are of the highest reckoning on earth. Thus the great miseries of this life are incomparably less than the least torments of hell; never can the creature say he is completely miserable, till the devouring jaws of that infernal pit inclose him: were the worst of his punishment what he feels here, he might in a manner bless himself; as Paul, on the contrary, saith, he should judge the saint miserable above others if all his hope were here. But there is the sinner's easeless endless state; there is not so much as one good day to release him a while from his pain, but he shall continue for ever in the height of his paroxysm: no change of weather, or hope of clearing, but a perpetual storm set in, to rain fire and brimstone upon him to all eternity, for so long it will be before the arm of the Almighty is weary of pouring out his wrath, or his heart be brought in love with sin, and reconciled to the sinner.

Now,

Now, in deprecating this, we should endeavour to keep this three-fold notion of hell in our thoughts, for which, above all, we are to desire to be delivered from it.

First, Conceive of hell as a state of sin as well as of suffering; yea, in its utmost height.

Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell. Neither sin in the wicked, nor grace in the saint, come here to their full ripeness; grace being an outlandish slip brought from heaven's paradise, riseth not to its just height and procerity, till it be transplanted and set in its native climate from whence it came. And sin being a brat of hell, comes not to its full complexion and monstrosity, till it be sent back to the place it came from. Here poor wretches are tolled on to sin by the pleasure it promiseth; but there they sin out of malice, for nothing else can invite them, where their morsel is eaten with such sour sauce. On earth the sinner is maidenly, and conceals the venom that is bagged in his heart, but in hell he spits it out in blasphemies against heaven. In a word, here he sits with wavering thoughts, and some weak purposes of repenting; but there he is as desperate as the devil himself, hardened beyond all relenting.

Now under this notion thou shouldst pray to be delivered from hell; that thou mayest never be one of that damned crew, who think it not enough to fight against God their maker on earth, but carry the war with them into the other world also, and there continue their feud with implacable enmity to eternity. Certainly the saints, to whom the motions of sin in this life are so grievous, above all the crosses and losses that befal them, and who count a few years neighbourhood among the wicked so great an affliction, that they cry, *Wo is me that I sojourn in Meshek, and dwell in the tents of Kedar*, must needs deprecate that dismal state with the utmost vehemency of spirit, wherein they should be everlastingly yoked with sin, and cooped up with unclean sinners, both which they lothe so perfectly.

It was the speech of a gracious woman, when on the very marches of death, *O Lord, send me not to hell among such filthy company, which thou knowest I have not liked on earth.* But as for those that can fadge very well with their lusts, and the company of the wicked here, I know not how they can thus deprecate that place, where they shall meet with that which pleaseth them so much on earth. David, Psal. xxvi. first protests his abhorrency againts the ways and society of the wicked, ver. 4. 5. *I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked.* Then his zeal for God, and delight he had in his house to praise him and serve him, ver. 6, 7, 8. after which he breaks out into this prayer, ver. 9. *Gather not my soul with sin-*

ners, nor my life with bloody men. As if he had said, I am not of their knot in my life, O let me not be of their bundle at my death. I have praised thee on earth, send me not to blaspheme thee in hell. I have loved the habitation of thy house, let me not dwell with unclean spirits hereafter.

Secondly, Hell is a state of separation from the blissful presence of God.

Pray to be delivered from it under this notion, as it is the last, yea, everlasting excommunication of the creature from God. *Go, ye cursed*, that is, never to see my sweet face more, called therefore *utter darkness*, because not the least beam or stricture of his favour to enlighten the souls of the damned, nor the least crevice is left open for hope to expect it. The heat of hell-fire is not so dismal as the want of this light, this makes them cursed; *Go, ye cursed*; the curse lies in their departure from God, the fountain of blessing; all besides this were tolerable: Would God cast but one kind look upon those miserable souls, as they swim in this lake of fire and brimstone, it were able to change the property of the place, and the joy thereof were enough to take away the sense of their torment. The three worthies in Daniel could walk in the fire, having God to bear them company, as if they had been only in the sun-shine.

That which a saint prizeth most in heaven is the presence of God, 1 Thess. iv. 17. *So shall we be ever with the Lord;* and hell is most dreaded by them, because a gulph is fixed between the souls in it and God, that no communion can be had with him to all eternity. O how few pray against hell under this notion! how few cry out, with David, *Cast me not away from thy presence!* Psal. li. If this were the thing above all they feared should befal them in the other world, would they so willingly live without acquaintance of God in this world? Surely no.

Thirdly, Hell is a state wherein the damned can never fully satisfy God's justice.

For their debt being infinite, and they (because creatures) but finite, will ever be paying, but the last farthing can never be paid, which is the only reason they lie for ever in prison, because it can never be said, Now God hath his due. But Christ, the saints' pay-master, discharged their whole debt at once, and took in the bond, which he nailed to his cross, leaving no back-reckoning unpaid, to bring the believer afterward into any danger from the hands of divine justice.

Now as an ingenuous debtor desires his freedom at his creditor's hands, that thereby he may be capable of paying his debt, as well as to escape the misery that himself should endure by his imprisonment; so an ingenuous soul (and such is every saint) deprecates hell, as well with an eye to God's glory, as to his own ease

ease and happiness. Lord, saith the sincere soul, if thou packest me away to hell, there I shall pay thee, it is true, by my just torments, something in a dribbling way by retail, but never be able to discharge the whole sum; but at Christ's hands thou mayest receive to the full, what thy justice can demand at mine, and also make me, thy poor creature, a trumpeter of thy praise to eternity. O send me not to blaspheme thee among the wretched crew of damned souls and unclean spirits, who so much desire to join with the choir of holy angels and saints, in singing hallelujahs to thy holy and glorious name.

CHAP. LVI.

Of Imprecatory Prayer, and how to be performed.

THE third branch in petitionary prayer is, Imprecation.

A kind of prayer this is, wherein the Christian imprecates the vengeance of God upon the enemies of God and his people; on such a sad and solemn errand are the saints' prayers sometimes sent to heaven, and speed as effectually as when they go to obtain blessings for themselves and the church of God. And no wonder, for they are perfumed with Christ's merits, and thereby are as acceptable to God as any other they put up in his name.

And the smoke of the incense which came from the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, Rev. viii. 4. Now what kind of prayers these were, is clear by the next words, ver. 5. *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and there were voices and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.* By which is signified the dreadful judgments which God, in answer to his saints' prayers, would bring upon the wicked world, whose bloody persecutions of the church, and fury against the truth of God, made the saints to cry to heaven for vengeance upon them, and it should inevitably come as thunder, lightning, and earthquakes, that can be resisted by no power or policy of the greatest monarch on earth. Thus, as at the firing of some cannon planted against a city, you may see its turrets or wall come tumbling down; so upon the prayers of the saints, great judgments were certainly to befal the enemies of God and his church.

Now the path wherein the Christian is here to tread being very narrow, he is to be the more cautious that he steps not awry.—He is, in this part of prayer, which is imprecatory, like one that drives a chariot on the brow of a steep hill, who, if he hath not

the quicker eye and steadier hand, may soon spoil all. The highest strains of the saint's duty run nearest the most dangerous precipices, as the most mysterious truths are soon perverted into the most damnable errors. I shall therefore first lay down a few particulars, which may serve as a rail to compass in this duty, for the better securing the Christian from falling into any miscarriage about it.

SECT. I.—First, Take heed thou dost not make thy private particular enemies the object of thy imprecation.

We have no warrant, when any wrong us, presently to go and call for fire from heaven upon them. We are bid indeed to *heap coals upon our enemy's head*, but they are of love, not of wrath and revenge. Job set a black brand upon this, and clears himself from the imputation of so great a sin. *If I rejoice at the destruction of him that hated me, or lift up myself when evil found him: Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul*, Job xxxi. 29, 30. He durst not wish his enemy ill, much less form his wish into a prayer, and desire God to curse him.

Our Saviour hath taught us a more excellent way, Mat. v. 44. *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.* I know this is counted a poor sheepish spirit by many of our gallants: Go, pray for them! no, send them the glove rather, and be revenged on them in a duel, by shedding their blood. This is the drink-offering which the sons of pride delight to pour out to their revenge; or curse them to the pit of hell with their God-damn-them oaths. O tremble at such a spirit as this! The ready way to fetch another: Psal. cix. 18. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he clothed himself with cursing like a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and into his bones like oil."

Moses, I suppose, had as noble a spirit as any of these that stile themselves men of honour, yet did he draw upon Aaron, or fall a cursing of Miriam, when they had used him so unworthily? I trow not, but bears all patiently; nay, when God declares his displeasure against Miriam for this affront put upon him, see how this holy man intercedes for her with God, Numb. xii.—This is valour of the right make, to overcome evil with good; and, instead of seeking revenge on him that wrongs us, to get the mastery of our own corruption so far as to desire his good the more.

Thus our Lord, when he was numbered among transgressors, even then *interceded for the transgressors*, Isa. liii. 12. That is, those very men which used him so bloodily, while they were digging his heart out of his body with their instruments of cruelty,

cruelty, then was he begging the life of their souls with his fervent prayers.

Secondly, When thou prayest against the enemies of God and his church, direct thy prayers rather against their plots than persons.

Thus the apostles, *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings*, Acts iv. 29. not, Confound their persons, but, Behold their threatenings, and so they leave their case with the Lord to right it for them. So David, 2 Sam. xv. 31. *O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Achitophel into foolishness.* Indeed God did do more, he destroyed the plot and plotter also; and in this sense the saints may say oft, with the prophet, *Thou hast done terrible things we looked not for*, and prayed not for, by pouring out his vengeance on the persons, when they have only prayed against their wicked designs.

Thirdly, When praying against the persons of those that are open enemies to God and his church, it is safest to pray indefinitely and in general.

Let them be confounded that hate Zion, Psal. cxxix. because we know not who of them are implacable, and who not, and therefore cannot pray absolutely and peremptorily against particular persons. There may be an elect vessel for a time in open hostility against God and his church, whom afterward God may consecrate to himself by converting grace, and so make him a holy vessel for the use of his sanctuary.

We do, it is confessed, find some in scripture prayed against by name, so Moses prayed against Korah and his accomplices, Num. xvi. and Paul against Alexander the coppersmith, *The Lord reward him according to his works*; but these and others in scripture had an extraordinary spirit, and not to be patterns for us in this case. Elias called for fire from heaven upon the captains, but the disciples were soundly chid for a preposterous imitation of his act, who had not his spirit, Luke ix. *Ye know not what spirit ye are of.*

Pray thou for vengeance on all the implacable enemies of God, and leave him to direct the arrow to its mark. Ahab was hit, though the arrow was shot at a venture by one that may be thought not of him. Prayers are sorted in heaven before their answer returns. Some of those emperors for whom the church in the primitive times prayed, yet proving implacable enemies to God and his people, felt the weight of those imprecations, which in general they put up against the adversaries of the truth.

Fourthly, In praying against the implacable enemies of God and his church, the glory of God should be principally aimed at, and vengeance on them in order to that.

Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered. As the sun when it hath dispelled the vapours that muffled it from our sight, breaks out in the glory of its beams; so God, by taking vengeance on his enemies, and scattering them in their wicked imaginations, with which they endeavoured to obscure his glory in the world, doth display and make visible the splendour of his attributes before his people's eyes.

The saddest consequence which attends the prosperity and success of God's enemies in the world, is their pride and blasphemy against God, his truth, and church. Then they belch out their horrid blasphemies against heaven, then they mock the poor saints, and pierce them with the sharp sword of their mocking language, while they say unto them, *Where is now their God?* But when God takes to himself power and strength, and confounds these giants and sons of the earth, by tumbling destruction upon their heads in the midst of their wicked enterprizes; when he recoils their own plots they have charged against his church upon themselves, making them go off like a pistol in their pocket, to procure their own death and ruin: now the reproach is taken off, and they have an answer given home to their question, Where is now your God? He is at their throat; he is with his sword of vengeance vindicating his glorious name upon them. When Julian the apostate was slain (and confessed at whose hand he received his fatal blow, in crying *Vicisti Galilæe*), then Libanius, his scoffing sophister, had his question, *What is the carpenter's son now a-doing?* (which a little before he had put to a Christian, in scorn of our Saviour,) thrown in his teeth, to the confusion of his face, and found the Christian answer, that *he was making a coffin for his master,* proved truer than he was aware of.

It cannot but be a joyful day to a saint, that prizeth the honour of his God above his own life, when he sees even the wicked, that before denied a providence, and thought all events were thrown out of blind fortune's lap, as if the world were but a lottery, wherein every one had his portion by chance, now forced, by the remarkable appearances of his power and wisdom, in saving his people, and destroying his implacable enemies, to confess, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth,* Psal. lviii. 11. This exaltation of the glorious name of God, every saint doth and should aim at, in the prayers wherein he imprecates vengeance, Psal. lxxxiii. 17. "Let them be confounded, let them be put to shame and perish; that men may know, that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth."

SECT. II.—Now from this head of imprecatory prayer there is,

First,

First, Matter of comfort to the saints against those direful imprecations which the wicked world belcheth out against them.

The saints, in this sense, are a cursed people. The wicked make the greatest part of the world; the church is a little flock, but her enemies a huge herd; and these cannot wish well to the saints. Cain (as Luther saith) will hate and kill Abel to the end of the world; the same spirit that was in him remaineth in his seed. Sometimes when the church of God flourisheth, and hath the sun of outward prosperity on her side, they may cry Hosannah in the crowd (as Shimei, when David was going up the hill of honour, then he could worship the rising sun, and crouch to him whom he had bitterly cursed in his distress). *But when they bless with the mouth, they curse inwardly with their heart*, Psal. lxv. 4.

A wicked man cannot wish well to a godly man; as, on the contrary, a saint cannot bless the wicked as such, Psal. cxxix. 8. "Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you, we bless you in the name of the Lord." They do indeed desire their conversion, and therein wish them well, but in the wicked way they are in at present they cannot bless them: so the wicked would desire the saints would come over to their party; do as they do, and then they would applaud and hug them: but let the saints keep close to God, and refuse to run into riot and excess with them, and they are sure to meet with their curse and imprecation—it is not their unblameable and peaceable walking will free them from their wrath and fury, Jer. xv. 10. "I have neither lent to men on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me." But fear not thou, who art a saint, their imprecations, this is but *anathema secundum dici*—like false fire in the pan of an uncharged gun, it gives a crack, but hurts not; God's blessing will cover thee from their curse, Psal. cix. 28. *Let them curse, but bless thou.* When the viper flew out of the fire upon Paul's hand, the barbarians looked that he should presently drop down dead, but it proved no such matter.

Thus the enemies of God have looked one generation after another when the church, that hath been always laden with their curses, should perish under them; but it lives yet to walk over the graves of all those who have wished it ill. Alas, poor wretches! what is your imprecation worth? Truly, as your blessing can do no good, so neither your curse any hurt, till you can get God to set his seal, and say Amen to it, which is impossible for you to obtain. Did our Saviour so sharply rebuke the rash request of his disciples, calling for fire to fall on them whom they thought deserved it? and will he gratify the lust of your devilish wrath and fury against his own dear people, by pouring on them what you audaciously, yea blasphemously, desire of him? Will

nothing serve you but to have God your executioner to hang whom you condemn? and those no other than his dear children, and for nought else but because they dare not be so wicked as yourselves? Go, bid the tender mother imbrue her hands in the blood of her sweet babe, that even now came out of her womb, and now lies at her breast; or the husband betray and deliver the wife of his bosom into the hands of murderers, that wait for her life; would these be an errand to make the messenger that brings them welcome to loving mother or husband? But if any such anomalies in nature's grammar, and monsters among men, were to be found, yet remember he is a God thou solicitest, whose nature is unchangeable, and whose covenant with his people is inviolable.

How was God courted by Balak and Balaam, with altar after altar, from place to place, but all to no purpose, Deut. xxiii. 4. "Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee." Never was any design carried on with more zeal and passionate desire to effect it, than this; one would think that God had said enough to Balaam at first, to make him sick of his enterprize, as a thing infeasible, Num. xxii. 12. *Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.* But he liked the work, and loved the wages, and therefore baffles his conscience, not telling the messengers all that God said to him, and they also report not all to Balak what Balaam said to them, so loth were both the work should fall; yet we see by the event, that they took but pains to lose their labour, nay worse, to lose themselves; for God made them, and him that set them on this work, to drink the curse which they would so fain have brewed for Israel.

Secondly, A word to the wicked.

Take heed that by your implacable hatred to the truth and church of God, you do not engage her prayers against you. The imprecatory prayers of the saints, when shot at the right mark, and duly put up, they are murdering pieces, and strike dead where they light. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily," Luke xviii. 7, 8. They are not empty words, as the imprecations of the wicked, poured into the air, and there vanish with their breath, but are received into heaven, and shall be sent back with thunder and lightning upon the pates of the wicked. David's prayer unravelled Achitophel's fine-spun policy, and twisted his halter for him. The prayers of the saints are more to be feared (as once a great person

son said and felt) than an army of twenty thousand men in the field. Esther's fast hastened Haman's ruin, and Hezekiah's against Sennacherib brought his huge host to the slaughter, and fetched an angel from heaven to do the execution in one night upon them.

CHAP. LVII.

Of Gratulatory Prayer; what is to be the Subject of our Thanksgiving.

THE second kind of prayer in this last division is, Thanksgiving; in handling whereof, I shall still keep my former method.

First, Shew what we are to return praises and thanks for.

Secondly, How we are to frame our thanksgivings we return.

First, What we are to praise and thank God for.

Now the object of thanksgiving (as of requests) is something that is good, but under another notion; we ask what we want, we bless and praise God for the mercies we have received, or for the hope we have from the promise that we shall in due time receive them. So that we see the Christian hath as large a field for the exercise of his thankfulness in praising God, as he hath in the petitionary part of prayer for his desires. This duty circumscribes heaven and earth; it takes both worlds within its circumference.

As God does nothing but he aims at his own glory thereby, Prov. xvi. 4. so no act of God towards his people, wherein he intends not their good, and as such becomes the subject of our thanksgiving. Hence we are bid, *In every thing give thanks.* O what a copious theme hath God given his people to enlarge their meditations upon! *In every thing.* The whole course and series of divine providence towards the saints is like a music-book, in every leaf whereof there is a song ready pricked for them, to learn, and sing to the praise of their God; no passage in their life of which they can say, in this we received no mercy for which we should bless our God.

Now, as a partial obedience is not good, so partial thanks are stark naught; not that any saint is able to keep all the commands, or reckon up all the mercies of God, much less return particular and express acknowledgment for every single mercy; but as he hath respect to all the commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. so he desires to value highly every mercy, and to his utmost power

power give God the praise of all his mercies, Psal. cxvi. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* This is an honest soul indeed, he would not sink any debt he owes to God, but calls his soul to an account for all his benefits, not this or that. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music; unthankfulness for one mercy disparageth our thanks for the rest.

But to sort the mercies of God into several ranks, that you may see more distinctly your work in this duty lie before you:

First, Mercies are either ordinary or extraordinary.

Our every-day commons and exceedings, with which God now and then feasts us. Thou must not only praise God for some extraordinary mercy, which once in a year betides thee; a mercy that comes with such pomp and observation, that all the neighbours take notice of it with thee, as the mercy which Zecharias and Elizabeth had in their son, that *was noised about all the country*, Luke i. 65. but also for ordinary every-day mercies: For,

1. We are unworthy of the least mercy, Gen. xxxii. 10.; and therefore God is worthy of praise for the least, because it is more than he owes us.

2. These common ordinary mercies are many.

Thus David enhanceth the mercies of this kind, "O God, how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with thee," Psal. cxxxix. 18. As if he had said, There is not a point of time wherein thou art not doing me good: As soon as I open my eyes in the morning, I have a new theme in some fresh mercies since I closed them over night to employ my praiseful meditations.—Many little items make together a great sum. What less than a grain of sand, yet what heavier than the sand on the sea shore? As little sins, such as are vain thoughts and idle words, because of their multitude, arise to a great guilt, and will bring in a long bill, a heavy reckoning at last; so ordinary mercies, what they want in their size (particularly and individually considered) of some other greater mercies, they have compensated in their number. Who will not say that a man shews as great, yea greater kindness, to maintain one at his table with ordinary fare all the year, than entertaining him with a great feast twice or thrice in the same time?

3. The sincerity of thy heart is seen more in thankfulness for ordinary mercies that extraordinary. As it shews a naughty heart upon every ordinary occasion to fall into a sin, so the soul very gracious that takes the hint of every common mercy to bless his God. Some they are so bound up in their spirits, that none but strong physic will work upon them; they can digest little afflictions

afflictions, and swallow ordinary mercies, without humbling themselves under the one, or praising God for the other. That is the upright heart which gentle physic prevails with, little chastisements humble, and ordinary mercies raise to thankfulness.

Secondly, Mercies are complete, or imperfect; begun mercies, or finished.

We must not make God stay for our praises till he hath finished a mercy, but praise him at the beginning of a mercy; we should be as ready to return our praises for a mercy, as God is to hear our prayers when begging a mercy. Now God comes forth early to meet a praying soul. *At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth*, Dan. ix. 10. *I said I would confess my transgression, and thou forgavest*, Psal. xxvii. Thus should we echo in our thankfulness to the first intimation that God gives in his providence of an approaching mercy. If you do but hear that the king is on the road toward your town, you raise your bells to ring him in, and stay not till he be entered the gates. The birds they rise betimes in the morning, and are saluting the rising sun with their sweet notes in the air. Thus should we strike up our hearts in praising God at the first appearance of a mercy.

Notable instances we have for this: Moses did not promise God, when he had saved the Israelites from Pharaoh's wrath, and the sea's waves, that at his landing them safe in Canaan, and lodging his victorious colours at the end of their journey in their full rest, then he would praise him for all his mercies together; no, but he presently pens a song, and on the bank, within sight of the howling wilderness, which they were now to enter into, he sings it with Israel in thankfulness for this first hansel after their march out of Egypt. So 2 Sam. vi. 12, 13. "And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings." And, 1 Chron. xv. 26. which is a place parallel to this, and speaks of the same passage, "When God helped the Levites that bare the ark, they offered seven bullocks and seven rams;" that is, so soon as by going a few paces or steps, they perceived God graciously to favour their enterprize (making no breach as formerly he had done upon them), they presently express their thankfulness upon the place, for this hopeful beginning, well knowing no way was better to engage God in the continuance and enlargement of his mercy, than by a praiseful entertainment thereof at its first approach.

In a word, thus the Jews in Babylon, at the very first peep of day, when their deliverance began to break out, are at their praises, Psal. cxxvi. 2. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen,

heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." It was now but coming-tide (as I may say) with them, the water was newly turned, and their affairs began to look with a more smiling face; yet now they salute their infant mercy with joy and thankfulness. May be, Christian, thou art upon a sick bed, and some little reviving thou hast, though far from thy former health; O bless God for this little lift of thy head from thy pillow. May be thou hast been as to thy spiritual state, in great distress (as it were in the belly of hell), swallowed up with terrors from the Lord, but now thy agony abates, though the comforter be not come, yet thou hast some strictures of divine light let into thy dungeon, that raise a little hope to wait for more; O let not this hansel of mercy pass without some thankful acknowledgement.—Some, alas, are like great ships, that cannot be set afloat but with the spring-tide and high-water of a mercy completed; if they have not all they would, they cannot see what they have, nor tune their hearts into a praiseful frame.

Thirdly, Mercies are such as are received in this life, or reserved for the next; mercies in hand, or mercies in hope.

There are promises which God will have us stay till we come to heaven for the performance of: and these we are to praise God for, as well as what we receive here; bless God for what he hath laid up for thee in heaven, as well as what he lays out upon thee on earth. The more our hearts are enlarged in thankfulness for those mercies, which we now have only in hope, the more honour we put upon his faithful promise. He that bestows much cost upon a house he hath in reversion, shews his confidence is great one day to be possessed of it. When a bill of exchange is paid at sight, it shews the merchant whose it is to be a man of credit and ability. By the joy thou takest up, and the thankfulness thou layest out, for what the bare promise tells thee thou shalt at death receive, thou glorifiest the truth of God, that is the promiser.

Fourthly, There are bitter mercies and sweet mercies; some mercies God gives in wine, some in wormwood.

Now we must praise God for the bitter mercies as well as the sweet; thus Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Too many are prone to think nothing is a mercy that is not sweet in the going down, and leaves not a pleasant farewell on the palate; but this is the childishness of our spirits, which, as grace grows more manly, and the Christian more judicious, will wear off. Who, that understands himself, will value a book by the gilding on the cover?

Truly none of our temporals (whether crosses or enjoyments), considered in themselves abstractly, are either a curse or a mercy: they

they are only as the covering of the book—it is what is writ in them that must resolve us whether they be a mercy or not. Is it an affliction that lies on thee? if thou canst find it comes from love, and ends in grace and holiness, it is a mercy, though it be bitter to thy taste. Is it an enjoyment? if love doth not send it, and grace end it (which appears when thou growest worse by it), it is a curse, though sweet to thy sense. There are sweet poisons, as well as bitter cordials. The saints commonly have greater advantage from their afflictions in the world, than enjoyments in the world; their eyes are oftener enlightened with wormwood than honey; those dispensations that are bitter and unpleasing to sense, than those that are sweet and luscious.

Fifthly, Mercies are either personal, or such as we receive in partnership with others; and these must be recognized as well as the other.

Pardon, O God, said he, *my other men's sins.* Thus, *Blessed be God,* say thou, *for my other men's mercies.* Haply, Christian, thou hast prayed for a sick friend, and he is restored to health; for another in distress of spirit, and the comforter is at last come to him. Now thou who hadst an adventure in his bottom, hast a mercy also in the return that is made to him, and therefore art to bless God with him. He that prays for his friend, and joins not with him in thankfulness when the mercy is given, is like one that is a means to bring his friend into debt, but takes no care to help him out. Thy friend, Christian, needs thy aid much more to pay the thanks, than to borrow the mercy, because this is the harder work of the two. But above all mercies to others, be sure church-mercies and national-mercies be not forgot.

CHAP. LVIII.

Four Directions how to Frame our Thanksgivings.

YOU have heard what is the subject of our praises and thanksgivings. We come now to the second thing promised, to lay down some rules how we are to frame our thanksgivings.

SECT. I.—First, Be sure the thing thou praisest God for be found among the good things of the promise; that is the compass by which we are to steer our course, as in the petitionary, so also in the gratulatory part of prayer.

If it be not in the promise, it is not a mercy, and so not the subject of our thanksgiving. When some prosper in wickedness, they

they are so bold as to thank God they sped so well. Now, if it be a grievous sin for a man to bless himself in any wicked way, Deut. xxix. 19. much more horrid is it to bless God for prospering therein; by the former, he only voucheth his own sin (which indeed is bad enough), but by the other, he makes God a party with him, and tempts the Lord to own it also.

'Tis a good speech of Bernard to this purpose, who, comparing those that on the one hand thank God for their success in wickedness, with hypocrites who praise him for the good things they receive, saith, *Isti impie malo suo Deo, isti Dei bona fraudulenter intorquent sibi*, Serm. 45. super Cant. The one impute their sin to God, the other ascribe the glory of his mercies to themselves. God cannot accept thy praise, unless he first approve thy fact. He that receives a bribe, is guilty of the fault. And dare you thus tempt the holy one? If the God you serve were like the heathen idols, the matter were not much. When the Philistines had practised their cruelty on Saul, they present his head to their God. The devil desires no better sacrifices than the fruit of men's sins. But the Holy One of Israel abhors all wicked praises. *The hire of a whore was not to be offered*, Deut. xxiii. 18.

Secondly, Let all your praises be offered up in Christ, Heb. xiii. 15. *By him let us offer the sacrifice of praises unto God.* 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* Couldst thou pen never so rare a panegyric, couldst thou flourish it with never so much art or rhetoric, and deliver it with the greatest passion and zeal possible, all this would be harsh, and grate the Almighty's ear, except sounded through Christ. 'Tis not the breath poured into the open air, but passing through the trumpet or some other instrument (where it is formed into a tuneable sound), that makes it pleasing music.

Possibly when thou prayest for a mercy, thou shelterest thyself under Christ's wing, and usest his name to procure thy admission (because conscious of thine own unworthiness to receive what thou askest), but when thou praisest God, thy errand being not to beg and receive, but to give, thou expectest welcome: He that brings a present shall surely find the door open; yes, if thy gift were suitable to the great God: But who art thou, that the great God should take a present at thy hand? If thou beest not worthy of the least mercy thou beggest, then surely thou art unworthy of this honour to have thy thank-offering accepted.—Thou needest Christ's mediation for the one as much as for the other.

Thirdly, Stay not in general, but descend to the particular instances of God's mercy towards thee, in thy thanksgivings.

Est

Est dolus in generalibus. It bewrays a slighty spirit, if not a false, when in confession of sin we content ourselves with a general indictment, I am a sinner, a great sinner, and there to stop without a particular sense of the several breaches made in the law of God. Neither is it here a better symptom, when a man puts God off with a compliment at distance, for his goodness and mercy in general, but takes no notice of the particular *items* which swell and make up the total sum.

Now to be able to do this, it will be necessary that thou takest special notice of God's daily providence to thee and thine, yea, and to the church of Christ also; lay up these in thy heart (as Mary did our Saviour's words) for matter of thanksgiving against the time of prayer; this is too good husbandry for the soul.—You do not expect to find that money in your chest, which you never laid up there; neither will you readily find in your heart to praise God for those mercies which you never committed to your memory. It is to be feared, the man means not to pay that debt honestly, which he hath not set down in his book, Psal. cvii. when the Psalmist there had stirred them up to thankfulness for the mercies of God in creation and providence, his conclusion is worthy of remark, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord;" as if he had said, the reason why so little praise is given for such great works of mercy is, because men see not the loving kindness of God in them; and they see not this, because they observe not those; and they observe not those, because they have not wisdom. 'Tis not a library makes a scholar, but wisdom to observe and gather the choice notions out of his books.

None want mercies to bless God for: divine providence is a large volume, writ thick and close with mercies from the one end to the other; but few, alas, have a heart to read in it, and fewer have wisdom to collect the choice passages of it, for such a holy purpose as this is.

SECT. II.—Fourthly, Excite thy praising graces.

David stirs up all that is within him to praise God, Psal. ciii. that is, all the powers and graces of his soul. To instance but in two or three.

First, Humility; a proud man cannot well tell how to beg, yet selfishness may make him stoop to it; but in thankfulness he must needs be a bungler, for this is a high piece of self-denial. *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.* The proud man's gift will cleave to his hand; he is unfit to set the crown upon God's head that hath a mind to wear it himself.—We find indeed the tool in the Pharisee's hand, but he cuts his work into chips; he seems to honour God with his mouth, but eats his words as he speaks them, and discovers plainly, that he

means

means more to exalt himself than God; *I thank God I am not as this Publican.* Thus, I thank God, comes in *pro forma;* it is the Publican that he disdains, and himself that he applauds.

You may easily think what a look ambitious Haman gave Mordecai, when he held his stirrup, who desired himself to have been in the saddle. How, alas, can a proud heart give God that which he covets himself? No man, saith Luther, can pray, *sanctificetur nomen tuum*, till he be first able to pray, *profanetur nomen meum: sanctified be thy name*, till he be willing his *own name should be debased.*

Labour therefore to vilify, nullify thyself; then, and not till then, thou wilt magnify, omnify thy God. None so zealous in begging, as he that is most pinched with his want; none so hearty in his thanks, as he that hath most sense of his unworthiness; and who can think better of himself, that is thoroughly acquainted with himself? If God had not set thee up, what stock couldst thou have found of thy own? Thou wert as bare as a shorn sheep, naked camest thou into the world, and ever since thou hast been cast upon thy God, even as a poor child upon the charge of the parish; what hast thou earned by all the service thou hast done him? not the bread of thy poorest meal.

And art thou yet proud? Bernard compares Joseph's carriage with his master, and the grateful souls with God, thus together; Joseph, saith the father, knew that his master, who put all he had into his hands, yet excepted his wife; and therefore he accounted it too base an ingratitude to take her from his master's bed, who had been so kind to him in his house. Thus, saith he, God freely gives his mercies into his saints' hands, but excepts his glory; therefore the gracious soul takes what God gives thankfully, but leaves the praise of them, which God reserves for himself, humbly.

Secondly, Love and joy.

Amor et gaudium faciunt musicum; love and joy, it is said, make a musician. Indeed then this music of praise is best, in heaven I mean, where these graces are perfect.

1. *Love*, this is an affection that cannot keep within doors, but must be sallying forth in the praises of God. Austin, speaking of heaven, breaks out thus, *Ibi vocabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus, laudabimus et cantabimus.* In heaven we shall have nothing to do but to behold the face of God, and seeing him we shall love him, loving him we shall praise him, and praising him we shall sing and rejoice. Love and thankfulness are like the symbolical qualities of the elements, easily resolved into each other, Psal. cxvi. 1. David begins with, *I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice;* and to enkindle this grace into a greater flame, he aggravates the mercies

mercies of God in some following verses, which done, then he is in the right cue for praises, and strikes up his instrument, verse 11. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?*

The spouse, when she was once thoroughly awake, pondering with herself what a friend had been at her door, and how his sweet company was lost through her unkindness, shakes off her sloth, riseth, and away she goes after him; now when with running after her beloved, she had put her soul into a heat of love, then she breaks out into an encomium of her beloved, praising him from top to toe, Cant. v. 10. That is the acceptable praising which comes from a warm heart; and he that would warm his heart, must use some holy exercise to stir up his habit of love, which, like natural heat in the body, is preserved and increased by motion.

2. Excite thy *joy*.

Psal. lxiii. 5. *I will sing with joyful lips.* A sad heart and a thankful hardly can dwell together; I mean sad with worldly sorrow. The disciples, for sorrow, could not hold open their eyes to pray, much more sure were they unfit to praise; this indeed makes the duty of praise and thanksgiving more difficult than to pray, because our joy here is so often interrupted with intervening sins and sorrows, that this heavenly fire seldom burns long and clear on the Christian's altar from which his praise should ascend.

Temptations and afflictions, they both drive the soul to prayer, and more dispose it for prayer; but they untune his instrument for praise. Hannah she wept and prayed, but durst not eat of the peace-offering, the sacrifice of praise, because she wept. It behoves us therefore the more to watch our hearts, lest they should be indisposed by any affliction for this duty. Do with thy soul as the musician in wet weather doth with his instrument, which he hangs not in a moist nasty room, but where it may have the air of the fire. Art thou under affliction? let not thy soul pore too long on these thy troubles, but bring it within the scent of God's mercies that are intermingled with them. Sit near this fire of God's love in Christ, warm thy heart with meditation on spiritual promises, while thou art under bodily pressures, and thou shalt find, through God's blessing, thy heart in some comfortable tune to praise God, in the saddest and most rainy day that can befal thee in all thy life. Thus David could make music in the cave, Psal. lvii. 7. *My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, O God, I will sing and give praise.*

CHAP. LIX.

Four more Rules to be observed in the Duty of Thanksgiving.

FIFTHLY, Content not thyself with a bare narrative, but give every mercy its proper accent, according to the enhancing circumstances thereof.

There is a great difference in two that sing the same song; from one you have only the plain song, the other descants and runs division upon it, in which consists the grace of the music. The mercies of God affect our hearts, as they are dressed forth, if we put on them the rich habiliments, the circumstances I mean that advance them, they appear glorious to our eyes, and enlarge our hearts in praises for them; but considered without these, we pass them slightly. God himself, when he would express the height of his love to his people, presents them to his own eye, not as now they are, but as clothed with the glory he intends them, Isa. lii. 6. *As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall the Lord rejoice over thee.* At the wedding-day, the best clothes are put on.

Thus do thou, to draw out thy thankfulness for mercies, consider them in those circumstances that may render them most glorious in thine eye. Some emperors have not suffered every one to draw their picture, lest they should be disfigured by their bungling pencil. Truly slighty praises disfigure the lovely face of God's mercy; they are but few that draw them to the life; to do this, much study and meditation are requisite. *The works of the Lord are sought out of them that have pleasure in them.*— The curious limner studies the face of the man before he makes his draught.

Praise is a work not done in a trice; the lesson must be pricked before it can be sung; read therefore the word, and learn from the saints there recorded, what aggravating circumstances they have observed in recognizing their mercies; sometimes we have them setting the accent upon the speedy return of their prayers, *In the day I cried thou answerest me,* Psal. cxxviii. This is a print that superadds a further excellency to the mercy; it was but knock, and have; come, and be served.

While the church were at God's door praying for Peter's deliverance, Peter is knocking at theirs to tell them their prayer is heard. Sometimes from the sinful infirmities which mingled with their prayers; now that mercy should come with a notwithstanding these, and steal upon them when they had hardly faith to wait for them, this hath exceedingly endeared the goodness of God to them. *I said, in my haste, all men are liars. What shall I return*

return unto the Lord for all his benefits? Psal. cxvi. Sometimes from the greatness of their straight—*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. O taste, and see how good the Lord is!* Psal. xxxiv. So, Psal. cxxxvi. *Who remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.* Indeed this must needs raise high appreciating thoughts of mercy. The water that God gave the Israelites out of the rock is called honey, because it came in their extreme want, and so was as sweet to them as honey. Silver is good when given to a poor man who must have died for lack of bread. Sometimes from the frequent returns of God's goodness, and expressions of his care; *Thy mercies are new every morning*, Lam. xiii. *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up, even till now, yet have not prevailed*, Psal. cxxi. *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*, 1 Sam. vii. 12. This gives such an accent, as without it the mercy cannot be pronounced with its due emphasis.

A course of sin is worse than an act of sin, Jer. xxiii. 10. *Their course is evil.* So a course of mercy from time to time speaks more love. Some that could bestow a single alms on a beggar, would beat him from their door, should he lie often there, and make it a trade. Sometimes, from the peculiarity of the mercy, they take notice of the distinction God makes in issuing out his favour, Psal. cxlvii. 20. *He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord. Lord, how wilt thou manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?* Let these few hints suffice to set thee on work to find out the other; without this, we rob God of the best part of our sacrifice—as if a Jew had stripped off the fat, and laid the lean on God's altar; or as he did by his idol, who took off the cloak of silver it had, and put on his own threadbare one in the room of it. The mercies thou receivest are great and rich, give not him thy beggarly praises; he expects they should bear some proportion to his mercy, *Praise him for his mighty acts, praise him according to his excellent greatness*, Psal. cl. 2.

SECT. I.—Sixthly, Distinguish between mercy and mercy, let the choicest mercies have the highest praises.

It shews a naughty heart to howl and make a great noise in prayer for corn and wine, and in the mean time to be indifferent or faint in our desires for Christ and his grace; nor better is it, when one acknowledges the goodness of God in temporals, but takes little notice of those greater blessings which concern another life

You shall have sometimes a covetous earth-worm speak what a blessed time it is for the corn and fruits of the earth (these fit

his carnal palate, as the pottage did Esau's), but you never hear him express any feeling sense of the blessed seasons of grace, the miracle of God's patience, that such a wretch as he is out of hell so long, the infinite love of God in offering Christ by the gospel to him; he turns over these, as a child doth a book, till he hits on some gaudy picture, and there he stays to gaze. Christ and his grace, with other spiritual blessings he skills not of, he cares not for, except they would fill his bags and barns. Now, shall such a one pass for a thankful man? will God accept his praises for earth, that rejects heaven, that takes corn and wine with thanks, and bids him keep Christ to himself with scorn, saying, as Esau, when his brother offered him his present, *I have enough?*

A gracious heart is of another strain, Eph. i. 4. *Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places by Christ.* Indeed God gives temporals to make us in love with spirituals, yea, with himself that gives them; as the suitor sends the token to gain the love of the person.

Again, As we are to distinguish between mercy and mercy, so even in these lower mercies that concern this life, be sure thou layest the accent of thy thankfulness on the spiritual part of them.

In every outward mercy, there is food for the flesh, and food for the spirit. Is it health? the carnal heart is most taken with it, as it brings the joy of his natural life to him, which sickness deprived him of. But that which above all pleaseth a saint is the opportunity that comes with it for his glorifying God in his place and generation; Psal. xlii. 11. *I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Is it an estate which God casts in? the carnal wretch values it for his private accommodation, as if it were given for no higher end than to spend it upon himself, or enrich his family. But the gracious blesseth God that gives him to give to the necessity of others, and counts a large heart to be a greater mercy than a full purse. David did not bless himself in his abundance, but blessed God that gave him heart to refund it again into the bosom of God, from whom he received it; 1 Chron. xxix. 14. *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?*

Seventhly, Let not thy praises be transient, a fit of music, and then the instrument hung by the wall, till another gaudy day of some remarkable providence makes thee take it down.

God will not sit at such a niggard's table, who invites him to a thanksgiving feast once for all the year. God comes not guest-wise to his saint's house, but to dwell with them, *He inhabits the praises of his people*, Psal. xxii. 3. That day thou blessest

not

not God, thou turnest him out of thy doors. David took this up for a life-work, *As long as I live will I praise thee. A lying tongue is but for a moment*, saith Solomon, Prov. xii. 19. Something drops from a liar within a while that discovers his falsehood; the tongue that lies in praising of God, is thus for a moment; he can curse God with that tongue to-morrow with which he praised him to-day.

SECT. II.—Eighthly, Thou must not only continue, but grow in thy praises.

As the tide increaseth, the ship is lifted higher on the water: as your crop increaseth, your barns are enlarged; as you grow richer, you advance in your garb and port; in a word, as your bodies grow, so you make your clothes bigger. Every day swells the tide of your mercies, adds to your heap, increases your treasure, and heightens your stature; *They are new*, saith the prophet, *every morning*. Lam. iii. 23. they grow whether thou sleepest or wakest. Now as the coat thou didst wear when thou wert a child, would not become thee now thou art a man; so neither will the garment of praise, which thou didst clothe thy soul with when a young convert, become thee now thou art an old disciple; thou standest deeper in God's books than before, and God expects according to what every man hath received.—Yourselves are not so bad husbands, but you would improve your estates to the height; would you now let a farm by the rate it bare forty or fifty years ago? why then may not God raise the rent of his mercies also?

Look back, Christian, and see how well the world is mended with thee since thou didst first set up; may be thou canst say, with Jacob, *I passed over with my staff, and behold now I am become two bands*. Well, see what thou hast more, in health, estate, in gifts, graces, or comforts, than thou hadst formerly, and then compare thy present thankfulness with what it was before these present additions were made to thy stock and treasure: would it not be a shame to thee, if it should be found not to have grown, as the goodness of God to thee hath done, much more if it hath shrunk and grown less? And yet how common are such instances of ingratitude!

The freer God is of his mercy, the more close and gripple they are in their thankful returns; when poor, they could be thankful for a short meal of coarse fare, more than they now are for their varieties and dainties. When sick, a few broken sleeps that amounted to an hour or two rest in a night, O how affected were their hearts for this mercy, whereas now they can rise and take little notice of the goodness of God, that gives them their full rest night after night without any interruption. Thus as the days lengthen, so the cold strengthens: But is it not strange to

see a man grow colder in his love to God, as the sun of God's mercy riseth higher, and shines hotter upon him? O it is sad to see the heap increase, and the heart waste; to find a man grow richer in mercy, and poorer in thankfulness.

CHAP. LX.

The Two Last Directions concerning the Duty of Thanksgiving.

NINTHLY, Let thy praises be real.

Words, we say, pay no debts. There goes more to thankfulness than a mouthful of windy praises, which pass away with the sound they make. A gracious heart is too wise to think that God will be put off with a song; he will give God that, but it is the least he intends. *The Lord is my strength and song, and I will prepare him an habitation,* Exod. xv. 2. Aye, here it sticks, building is chargeable, thankfulness is a costly work: *Shall I offer to God that which cost me nothing?* saith David to Araunah. Cheap praises are easily obtained, but when it comes to charges, then many grow sick of the work.

The Jews could sing a song when delivered from Babylon, Psal. cxxi. but it was long before they could find in their hearts to *build God an habitation;* the time was not come for that: they might have said, their heart was not come—they had money and time enough to build their own nests, but none for God, tho' herein they played the fool egregiously, for as fast as they built at one end, God pulled down at the other. Some have been of their mind in our times, instead of finding God an habitation, and loving our nation to build synagogues, they have pulled them down, and carried the beams to their own houses. Excellent artists, in taking down ministers, ministry, and their maintenance, whereby the gospel should be upheld! If this be the way to thrive, God gave his people but ill counsel, when he said, *Consider now, from this day I will bless you,* Hag. iii. But you will ask, what I mean by real praises?

SECT. I.—First then, Our praises are real when they are cordial.

All that is within me bless his holy name, Psal. ciii. 1. When his mercies beget amiable, high, and honourable thoughts of God in our heart. We read of *cursing God in the heart,* Psal. cvi. 1. which then is done, when we have base, low, unbecoming thoughts of his greatness and goodness; and on the contrary, when

when the mercies of God imprint such an image in the heart of him, as livelily represents these his attributes, then thou blessest God in thy heart, by adoring his Majesty, reverencing his holiness, delighting in his love, and fearing his goodness; here is real thankfulness.

What is *laus* or *honour*, but a reflection of the person's excellency we commend? Now, as the glass represents the image of the person that looks on it, so the thankful soul reflects those glorious attributes again upon God, which he puts forth in his mercies. Thus God sees his face in a true glass, which the thankful soul holds up, when he praiseth him. Whereas an unthankful heart, like a broken glass, distorts and disfigures the beautiful face of God, by conceiving such low thoughts of God, as are unworthy of his glorious attributes.

Secondly, When our praises are obediential.

God accounts those mercies forgotten, which are not written with legible characters in our lives, Psal. cvi. 21. *They forgat God their Saviour*. That of Joshua is observable, chap. viii. 32. upon their victory over the city Ai, an altar is built as a monument of that signal mercy; now mark, what doth God command to be writ or engraved on the stones thereof? One would have thought the history of that day's work should have been the sculpture, but it is *the copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel*, ver. 32. whereby he plainly shewed the best way of remembering the mercy was not to forget to keep the law. Saul could not blind Samuel's eyes with his many good-morrows, that the people saved the best of the cattle for sacrifice: *Hath the Lord*, saith he, *as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying his voice? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. as if he had said, What, Saul, thinkest thou to bribe God with a sacrifice, while thou art disobedient to his command? dost thou take the swan, and stick the feather in the room? deny him thine own heart to obey his word, and give him a beast's heart in sacrifice for it? Is this the oblation which he hath required, or will accept?

Truly God riseth hungry from our thanksgiving-dinners, if obedience be not a dish at the table; without this, we and our sacrifices may burn together. God will pluck such from the horns of the altar, and take them off their knees with their hypocritical praises, to pay his debt in another kind. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land*, Isa. i. 19. Then, and not till then, will God eat of your sacrifices, and yourselves taste the sweetness of your enjoyments. *He meets him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness*, Isa. lxiv. 5. Not either apart, but both together, are required; not rejoice

without working righteousness, nor that without rejoicing in the work. The threatening, Deut. xxviii. is levelled against Israel, not barely because they served not God, but because *they served him not with gladness in the abundance of his mercies.* God delights to have his mercy seen in the chearful countenance of his servants, while they are at his work; which may tell the spectators they serve a good master.

SECT. II.—Thirdly, They are real praises when they end in acts of mercy.

Very observable is that place, Heb. xiii. 15. "By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." Now mark the very next words, "But to do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." As if he had said, Think not you may thank God to save charges, be willing to both or neither. God's goodness to us should make us merciful to others. It were strange indeed a soul should come out of his tender bosom with a hard uncharitable heart.

Some children do not intend to take after their earthly parents, as Cicero's son, that had nothing of his father but the name; but God's children partake of all their heavenly Father's nature.—Philosophy tells us, that there is no re-action from the earth to the heavens; they indeed shed their influences upon the lower world, which quicken and fructify it, but the earth returns none back to make the sun and stars shine the better. David knew very well, that his goodness extended not unto God, but this made him reach it forth to his brethren, *to the saints which are on the earth*, Psal. xvi. 2. Indeed God hath left his poor saints to receive his rents we owe unto him for his mercies. An ingenuous guest, though his friend will take nothing for his entertainment, yet, to shew his thankfulness, will give something to his servants. At Christ's return, how doth he salute his saint? Mat. xxv. not, *Come, ye blessed*, ye have kept such a thanksgiving day, and filled the air with your songs of praise; but, *When I was an hungry ye fed me, when naked ye clothed me.*

Alms-deeds, in St Paul's language, are called fruit; *When I have performed this, and sealed to them this fruit*, Rom. xv. 28. implying, that all our profession, without these good works, are but leaves: this is the solid fruit of our faith, love to God and thankfulness for his mercies. Neither must these acts of charity be restrained to the money in thy purse, or bread in thy cupboard, though these are included; there are poor souls, as well as poor bodies, that need relief.

Hath God plucked thee out of Sodom, out of satan's bondage, where are then thy bowels of compassion to those who are yet chained to the devil's post? what means dost thou use to redeem these

these captives out of their worse than Turkish slavery? The argument God urgeth to Israel to use strangers kindly, is to remember they were once so, Deut. xxiii. 7. Hast thou, after long lying in the dungeon of spiritual darkness, and troubles of conscience, had thy head lift up with the comforts of the spirit, received into the presence of God, as Pharaoh's butler was to his prince's court? how canst thou think thyself thankful, while thou forgettest others that lie in the same prison-house, under as sad fears and terrors as once thyself did? "Unto the upright there ariseth light out of darkness; he is gracious and full of compassion," Psal. cxii. 4. Surely this will hold, if in any, then in this case.

In a word, that I may not be thought to make you hard to the outward man, while I stir up your charity to the inward; hath God raised thee to an estate? (may be thy pilgrim's staff, with Jacob's, is turned to two troops) dost thou now shew the kindness of God to his poor members? as David, who enquired if there were none of the house of Saul. O how unlike are we to the saints of primitive times! They would run for to meet an object of their charity, and we run from them; they considered the poor, what they wanted, how they might relieve them, yea, they *devised liberal things;* but we consider and contrive how we may save our purse best; they were willing to part with all in case of extremity, while we grudge a little from our superfluity, laying that by pride on our backs which should cover the poor's; throw that to our hawks and hounds, which should refresh the bowels of the poor; yea, spend more in one drunken meeting, a miser's feast, or a wrangling suit at law, than we can be willing to give in a year to the necessitous members of Christ.

SECT. III.—Fourthly, When it produceth a strong confidence in God for the future.

Who will say, that man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness, that nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future, and dares not trust him when he needs him again? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God, for his miraculous broaching the rock to quench their thirst, Psal. lxxviii. 35. *Behold, he smote the rock, can he give bread also?* This indeed was their trade all along their wilderness-march. Wherefore God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were piping-hot, and the feast stood before them, then they could say, *God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer;* but by their temper and carriage in straits: when the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion then had they of God? could they sanctify his name so far, as to trust him for their dinner to-morrow, who had feasted them yesterday? Truly no, as soon as they feel their hunger return,

turn, like froward children they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore God spits in the face of their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record; *they forgat his works, and waited not for his counsel.*

O how sad is this! that after God hath entertained a soul many a time at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, they should be so ill husbanded, that not a bit of them all should be left to give faith a meal, thereby to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as we desire? He is the most thankful man that ponders up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with the thoughts of what God hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits. When Job was on the dunghill, he forgat not God's old kindnesses, but dare trust him with a knife at his throat, *Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.*

He that distrusts God after former experience, is like the foolish builder, Mat. vii. he rears his monument for past mercies on the sand, which the next tide of affliction washeth away.

Tenthly and lastly, Thou must not only praise God thyself, while on the stage of this earth, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity.

The Psalmist, speaking of the mercies of God, saith, *We will not hide them from our children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,* Psal. lxxviii. 4. Children are their parents' heirs, they enter upon their estate; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of his treasure, nor the least of his child's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience, Psal. xliv. "Our fathers have told us what works thou hast done in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen," &c. ver. 2, 3. from this they ground their confidence, ver. 4. Thou art my King, O God, command deliverances for Jacob; and excite their thankfulness, ver. 8. "In God we boast all day long, and praise thy name for ever." Indeed as children are their parents' heirs, so they become, in justice, liable to pay their parents' debts; now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and therefore it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXI.

A Reproof to the Ungrateful World, where several kinds of Ingratitude are discovered.

Use 1. WE shall wind up this head with a double application, of reproof and exhortation.

First, Of reproof.

How few, alas, can we find so ingenuous, as to pay this little quit-rent to the great Lord of the world's manor, for all the mercies they hold of him. Some are such brutes, that, like swine, their nose is nailed to the trough in which they feed; they have not the use of their understanding so far, as to lift up their eye to heaven and say, There dwells that God that provides this for me, that God by whom I have my livelihood. It were well if we knew not in all our towns where such brutes as these dwell.

You would count it a sad spectacle, to behold a man in a lethargy, with his senses and reason so blasted by his disease, that he knows not his nearest friends, and takes no notice of those that tend him, or bring his daily food to him. How many such senseless wretches are at this day lying upon his hands? Divine providence ministers daily supplies to their necessities, but they take no notice of his care and goodness. Others there are that feloniously, yea sacrilegiously, set the crown of praise on their own head, which is due alone to God.

Thus Nebuchadnezzar writes his own name upon his palace, and leaves God out of the story. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Dan. iv. 30.—Proud wretch! was not every stone he used in that pile cut out of God's quarry? and for every skip of sand did he not come upon God's ground? Thus the atheistical husbandman gives his plough and dung-cart more thanks than the God of heaven, who crowns the year with his goodness. The proud soldier stands upon his sword, daring to take the honour of his victory to himself, and not ascribe it to the Lord of hosts, who at his pleasure gives and takes away the heart of the mighty. Yea some, rather than God shall have it, will give it to any other; thus Pope Adrian, in his blasphemous inscription on the gates of a college he built, abuseth God with scripture language, Utrecht planted me, Lovain watered me, and Cæsar gave the increase; which made one underwrite, *Nihil hic Deus fecit*—it seems God did nothing for this man.

Not

Not that I think it unlawful to acknowledge our benefactors, as instruments in God's hands for our good, but to blot out the name of God, our chief founder, to write the name of an underling creature, is a high piece of wickedness and ingratitude. I like that form which a good man used to his friend for a kindness, *I bless God for you, I thank God and you.* He that will exact more, requires what we owe him not.

In a word, some, the worst of the three, instead of returning thanks to God for his mercies, abuse them to his dishonour; it is not more sad than true, that the goodness of God with many serves but to feed and nourish their lusts; they eat and drink at God's cost, and then rise up to play the rebels against God—no weapons will serve them to use but the mercies he hath given them. It is too bad if the tenant pays not his easy rent, but to make strip and waste of the trees on his landlord's ground, this is more intolerable; yet such outrages are daily practised in the wicked world with the mercies of God.

Michael Balbus is infamous for his horrid ingratitude, who, the same night that the emperor had pardoned and released him, barbarously slew his saviour: and do not many, whom God lets out of the prison of affliction, lift up their traitorous knife at God, wounding his name with their oaths, drunkenness, and prophaneness, as soon almost as the sentence of death is taken off, and their prison door set open?

To conclude, others that will needs pass for thankful, yet all the return is but windy praise; honour him with their lips, and pour contempt upon him in their lives. What music more harsh and unpleasing, than to hear a harper sing to one tune with his voice, and play another with his hand? O it grates in God's ears when Jacob's voice is attended with Esau's rough hands.

Truly when I consider how the goodness of God is abused and perverted by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of his mind that said, *Maximum miraculum est Dei patientia et munificentia;* the greatest miracle in the world is God's patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince hath an enemy got into one of his towns, he doth not send them in provision, but lays close siege to the place, and doth what he can to starve them. But the great God, that could wink all his enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them.—Well may he command us to bless them that curse us, who himself does good to the evil and unthankful. O what would not God do for his creature, if thankful, that thus heaps the coals of his mercies upon the heads of his enemies?

But think not, sinners, that you shall escape thus; God's mill goes slow, but it grinds small! the more admirable his patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and insupportable will that fury

fury be which ariseth out of his abused goodness. Nothing blunter than iron, yet when sharpened, it hath an edge that will cut mortally. Nothing smoother than the sea, yet when stirred into a tempest, nothing rageth more. Nothing so sweet as the patience and goodness of a God, and nothing so terrible as his wrath when it takes fire. Be therefore, in the fear of God, stirred up to bethink yourselves what you mean to do. It is the trick, they say, of distracted people, to spite their dearest friends and nearest relations most; these, above all, they seek to mischieve; but what folly and madness is it in thee to fly at the face of God with thy sins, that hath done more for thee than all thy friends, and can do more against thee than all thy enemies thou hast in the world? But the more to move thee,

First, consider, That God keeps an exact account of all his mercies thou receivest.

You cannot steal God's custom. He that could tell the prophet where his servant Gehazi had been, and what he had received of Naaman, will one day tell thee to a farthing every talent thou hast received of him. God hath, as a bag for thy sins, so a book for his mercies; and what he books he means to reckon for.

Secondly, Consider how severely he hath dealt with those that never had so much mercy from him as thyself.

If heathens are speechless in judgment, when God reckons with them for their mercies, O how confounded wilt thou be, that goest from gospel dispensations to hold up thy hand at the bar before the Judge of all the world? Rom. i. 21. *They are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.* If the heathen, that was not thankful for his penny, cannot lift up his hand in the day of the Lord, where wilt thou appear, that hast so many hundred talents on thy hand to answer for?

Quest. But may be, poor wretch, thou mayest now ask, What thou shouldst do to give God the praise of his mercies?

Answ. In a word, Thou hast but one way to pay God this his tribute, and it is a strange one, even by running deeper into his debt, than by all the mercies that yet thou hast received of him.

Hear, therefore, poor sinner, what I mean, that God, who hath given thee life and being, that hath exercised unspeakable patience towards thee, been at a vast expence in his daily providence upon thee, to preserve, feed, clothe, and maintain thee, all which have been most wretchedly abused by thee, and for it thy life become forfeited to his justice, doth yet offer a greater mercy than all these, even the Lord Jesus, whom, if thou wilt, with shame and sorrow for thy past sins, but come unto, and accept to be

thy

thy Lord and Saviour, then wilt thou be in a posture, and not till then, to give God the praise of his other mercies. He that rejects this greatest of all mercies, can never be thankful for any. It is Christ who alone can give thee a spirit of thankfulness; not a christless person in the world but is an unthankful person; *evil* and *unthankful* are inseparable. O what a blessed gospel is this, that teacheth us here to pay debts by running deeper into the score? to be thankful for less mercies, by accepting that which is infinitely greater.

CHAP. LXII.

An Exhortation to Thankfulness pressed on the Saint, from several Arguments.

Use 2. SECONDLY, For exhortation to the saints, not to call you to this duty, which if you answer, your name is undoubtedly your practice; but to quicken you in it, and make you more in love with it.

1. Consider, It is a duty that becomes you well.

Psal. xxxiii. *Praise is comely for the righteous;* this garment of praise sits so well on none as on your back; you should not think yourselves drest in a morning till you have it on. An unthankful saint carries a contradiction with it. Evil and unthankful are the twins that live and die together; as any ceaseth to be evil, he begins to be thankful.

2. It is that which God both expects and promiseth himself at your hands; he made you for this end.

When the vote passed in heaven for your being, yea, happy being in Christ, it was upon this account, that *you should be a name and a praise to him*, on earth in time, and in heaven to eternity. Should God miss of this, he would fail in one part of his main design. What prompts him to bestow every mercy, but to afford you matter to compose a song for his praise? *They are a people that will not lie, so he became their Saviour*, Isa. lxiii. he looks for fair dealing, you see, at your hands. Whom may a father trust with his reputation, if not a child? where can a prince expect honour, if not among his courtiers and favourites? Your state is such, that the least mercy you have is more than all the world can shew besides.

Thou, Christian, and thy few brethren, divide heaven and earth among you; what hath God that he withholds from you? sun, moon, and stars are set up to give you light: Sea and land have

have their treasure and store for your use; others do but ravish them, you are the rightful heirs to them; they groan that any other should be served by them. The angels, bad and good, minister unto you; the evil, against their will, are forced, like scullions, when they tempt you, to scour and brighten your graces, and make way for your greater comforts; like Haman, they hold your stirrup, while you mount up higher in favour with God.—The good angels are servants to your heavenly Father, and disdain not to carry you, as the nurse her master's child, in her arms. Your God withholds not himself from you, he is your portion, father, husband, friend, and what not? The same heaven you shall have to dwell in with him, and the same table and fare; God is his own happiness, and admits you to enjoy himself. O what honour is this, for the subject to drink in his prince's cup? Psal. xxxvi. 8. *Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.*

And all this not the purchase of your sweat, much less blood; the feast is paid for by another hand, and you are welcome: only he expects your thanks to the founder of it, at whose cost you are entertained. No sin-offering is imposed upon you under the gospel; thank-offerings are all he looks for.

3. God hath a book of remembrance for your services.

He takes kind notice of the little good that is in you, and done by you; not the least office of love to his name and house is overlooked, though mingled with much evil; he commends the one, pardons and pities you for the other. *There is some good found in him towards the Lord God of Israel;* it was said of Jeroboam's son, 1 Kings xiv. 13. What an honourable testimony doth God give of Asa, 2 Chron. xv. 17. that *his heart was perfect all his days*, though we find many wry steps he took. The little strength that Philadelphia had must not be forgot. What a favourable apology doth Christ make for Joshua, accused by satan for his filthy garments; *Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* and for his drowsy disciples, *The flesh is weak, but the spirit is willing.*

Now, shall God take notice of the little good in his saints, apologize for their infirmities, commend and reward their weak services, yea, eternize their memory with honour, Psal. cxii. *The righteous shall be had in remembrance?* and doth not he deserve to be exalted for his infinite perfections? praised and loved, who is all good, ever good, and doing good to them? Shall he be tender of thy name, and thou regardless of his honour, so as to entomb his precious mercies in the sepulchre of unthankfulness?

4. Consider what an ornament a thankful frame of heart is to religion.

This

This commends God to the unbelieving world, who know little more of him than your lives preach to them; they read religion in that character you print it, and make their report of God and his ways, as they see you behave yourselves in the world; if you walk disconsolately, or grumble at divine providence, how can they believe the ways of God are so pleasant as they are told? We listen to what the servant saith of his master, if he commends him, and goes chearfully through his work, this gains him credit among his neighbours. It was a convincing testimony Daniel gave to the goodness of God, when he would praise him thrice a-day, with the hazard of his life.

To see a poor Christian thankful for his little pittance, yea, in the midst of his afflictions, as if he had crowns and kingdoms at his disposal: An ordinary understanding would reason thus, surely this man finds some sweetness in his God that we see not, and is better paid for his service than we know of. The joyful praises of dying saints in the midst of fiery flames, have made their spectators go home in love, not only with religion, but with martyrdom.

5. Consider the honour that is put upon you in this duty.

To attend on a prince, though bare-headed, and on the knee, is counted more honour for a nobleman, than to live in the country, and have the service of his fellow-subjects. Though we serve God all the day long, yet in acts of worship we have the honour immediately to attend on him, and minister to him. Oh blessed are they who may thus stand about him! praise is the highest act of worship, and therefore to be continued in heaven's blissful state; whereas other graces shall be melted into love and joy, so other duties of worship, as hearing, praying, &c. into praise and thanksgiving.

The priesthood was a great honour under the law—he chose Aaron and his tribe from among their brethren to serve at his altar; he would take that gift from their hand which he would not at a king's; but in the gospel-state every believer hath a more honourable priesthood, because he brings better sacrifices, the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; and while thou art honouring thy God, thou art honouring thyself; the whole body shines with the beams of that crown which is put on the head.

6. Consider, that thy praises will render thy prayers more grateful and successful.

It was thought a good omen of Alexander's future victories, that he was liberal to the gods in his sacrifices, throwing frankincense by handfuls into the fire. He is a niggard to himself that is so to his God. *Remittatur in suum principium cœleste profluvium, quo uberius terræ refundatur*, Bern. Serm. 42. *in Cantic.*

Cantic. Let the river of God's mercies be returned to pay its tribute to God, their source and fountain, that they may refund more abundantly to us again. You shall observe the saints in their greatest straits, when they have most to beg, deliver their prayers praise-wise. Jehoshaphat sends his priests praising God into the field, and God fights for him. David in the cave, *My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.* Daniel, when a trap was laid for his life, *praiseth God thrice a-day.* Christ himself, when he would raise Lazarus, lifts up his eyes and blesseth God, *I thank thee, O Father*, &c. When he was to suffer, sings an hymn. A thankful heart cannot easily meet with a denial; *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand*, Psal. cxlix. 6.

VERSE XVIII. *In the Spirit.*

WE are come to the third branch in the apostle's directory for prayer, the principal or spring from whence they are to flow: *The Spirit; Praying in the Spirit.*

CHAP. I.

What it is to Pray in the Spirit shewn.

Quest. BUT what is it to pray in the spirit?

Answ. Interpreters generally comprehend in this phrase both the spirit of the person praying, and the Spirit of God, by which our spirits are fitted for, and acted in prayer. *Est oratio in spiritu, nempe et nostro quo oramus, et Spiritu sancto per quem oramus*; so *Zanch. in loc.* That is a prayer in the spirit, which by the help of the Holy Spirit is performed with the soul and spirit.

These two indeed go ever together, we cannot act our spirit without the Holy Spirit; alas, that is like a lump of clay in our bosoms till he quickens it; and we cannot but pray with our heart and spirit, when the Holy Spirit moves upon it. The spirit's breath is vital. The Holy Ghost doth not breathe in us, as one through a trunk or trumpet, which is a mere passive instrument; but stirs up our hearts, and actuates our affections in the duty. Prayer is called, *A pouring out of the soul to God*; the

soul is the well from which the water of prayer is poured; but the spirit is the spring which feeds this well, and the hand that helps to pour it forth; the well would have no water without the spring, neither could it deliver itself of it without one to draw it. Thus the Spirit of God must fill the heart with praying affections, and enable them also to pour themselves forth. From the words thus sensed, we shall a while dwell upon these two propositions.

Obs. 1. He who will pray acceptably, must pray in his heart and spirit.

Obs. 2. He that would pray in his own spirit, must pray in the Spirit of God.

Obs. 1. To begin with the first.

Praying in the spirit is opposed to lip-labour. *They draw near to me with their lips, but their heart is removed from me;* like an adulteress, whose heart and spirit is as far from her husband, as where her paramour is. It is no prayer, in which the heart of the person bears no part. Parisiensis, glossing upon that place of Hos. xiv. 2. *So will we render the calves of our lips,* compares the duty of prayer to the calves in the legal sacrifices; the composure of the words, saith he, in prayer, is as the skin or hide of the beast, the voice as the hair, the understanding as the flesh, the desires and actions of the heart, fat of the inwards; this, and this alone, makes it a prayer in God's account.

My spirit prayeth, saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 4. and in ver. 15. *I will pray with the spirit, and sing with the spirit.* So Rom. i. 9. *God whom I serve in the spirit.* The melodious sound which comes from a musical instrument is formed within the belly of the instrument, the deeper the belly of the instrument, the sweeter is its music; the same strings on a flat board, touched by the same hand, would make no music. The melodiousness of prayer comes from within the man, *We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit;* and the deeper the groans are that come from thence, still the sweeter the melody. There may be outward worship, and inward atheism, as Melancthon said, *Vos Itali adoratis Deum in pane, quem non creditis in cælo esse.* There may be much pomp in the outward ceremony of the performance, when the person neither loves nor believes that God whom he courts with an external devotion.

The blemishes which made the sacrifices in the law rejected, were not only in the outward limbs of the beast; the sick, as well as the lame beast, was refused, Mal. i. 8. We read of loud praises, when never a word was heard spoken. But God owns none for a prayer that hath the vehemence of the voice, but not inspirited with the affection of the heart. Separate the spirit from

from the body, and the man is dead; the heart from the lip, and there is a dissolution of prayer.

Now in handling of this, I must first shew, what it is to pray in our spirit; and then, why we are thus to pray.

For the first, We pray in our spirit when these three are found in the duty.

1. When we pray with knowledge.
2. When we pray in fervency.
3. When we pray in sincerity.

These three exercise the three powers of the soul and spirit: By knowledge the understanding is set on work; by fervency, the affections; and by sincerity, the will; all these three are required in conjunction to praying in the spirit. There may be knowledge without fervency, and this (like the light of the moon) is cold, and quickens not; there may be heat without knowledge, and this is like mettle in a blind horse; there may be knowledge and fervency, and this is like a chariot with swift horses, and a skilful driver in the box, but being dishonest, carries it the wrong way. Neither of these, nor both these avail, because sincerity is wanting to touch these affections, and make them stand to the right point, which is the glory of God. He shall have little thanks for his zeal that is fervent in spirit, but serving himself with it, not the Lord.

CHAP. II.

Sheweth, To Pray in the Spirit is required that we Pray with Understanding: also why this is required, and what Understanding is required.

FIRST, To pray acceptably it is required we pray with understanding.

A blind sacrifice was rejected in the law, Mal. i. 8. much more are blind devotions under the gospel. As knowledge aggravates a sin, so ignorance keeps from the excellency of an action that is good. *I bear them witness*, saith Paul, *they have a zeal, but not according to knowledge*. The want of an eye disfigures the the fairest face, the want of knowledge the devoutest prayer.—*Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews*, John iv. 22. Where we see what a fundamental defect the want of knowledge is in acts of worship, such as brings damnation with it.

But why is knowledge so requisite to acceptable praying?

SECT. I.—First, Because without this, it is not a reasonable service, for we know not what we do.

God calls for your reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1. which some oppose to the legal sacrifices—they offered up beasts to God; in the gospel we are to offer ourselves. Now the soul and spirit of a man is the man. Why did not God lay a law on beasts to worship him, but because they had not a rational soul to reflect upon their own actions? And will God accept that service and worship of a man, wherein he doth not exercise that faculty that distinguisheth him from a beast? *Shew yourselves men*, saith the prophet to those idolaters, Isa. xlvi. 8. And truly he that worships the true God ignorantly, is brutish in his knowledge, as well as he that prays to a false god.

Secondly, Because the understanding is the leading faculty of the soul, and so the key of the work.

The inward worship of the heart is the chief; now the other powers of the soul are disabled, if they want this their guide, which holds the candle to them. As for these violent passions of seeming zeal, sorrow and joy, which sometimes appear in ignorant worshippers, and their blind devotions, they are spurious. Christ's sheep, like Jacob's, conceive by the eye. First, the saint's eye is enlightened to see the majesty and glorious holiness of God, and then it reveres, and mourns before him in the sense of his own vileness. *Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. Again, by an eye of faith he beholds the goodness and love of God to poor sinners in Christ, and in particular to him; and this eye affects his heart to love and rely on him, which it is impossible the ignorant soul should do.

SECT. II.—*Quest.* But you will say, What is necessary for the praying soul to know?

Answ. First, That he to whom he directs his prayer is the true God.

Religious worship is an incommunicable flower in the crown of the deity, and that both inward and outward. We are religiously to worship him only, who, by reason of his infinite perfections, deserves our supreme love, honour, and trust. He must have the crown, that owns the kingdom; the *kingdom and power* is God's, therefore the glory of religious worship belongs to him alone, Mat. vi. 13. Angels are the highest order of creatures, but we are forbid to *worship any of the host of heaven*, Deut. xvii. 3. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee it doth appertain.* Where fear is put for religious worship, as appears by the circumstance of the place. The want of this knowledge filled the heathen world with idolatry, for where they found any virtue or excellency in the creature, presently they adored

adored and worshipped it; like some ignorant rustic, who, coming to court, thinks every one he sees in brave clothes to be the king.

Secondly, There is required a knowledge of this true God, what his nature is. *He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 5.

It is confessed, a perfect knowledge of the divine perfection is incomprehensible by a finite being. He answered right who said, when asked, *Quid est Deus? Si scirem essem ipse Deus;* none indeed knows God thus, but God himself; yet a scripture-knowledge of him is necessary to the right performance of this duty. The want of understanding his omniscience and infinite mercy, is the cause of vain babbling; and a conceit of long prayers, which our Saviour charges upon the heathen, and prevents in his disciples, by acquainting them with these attributes, Mat. vi. 7, 8. They came rather *narrare*, than *rogare*, to inform God, than to beg. The ignorance of this high and glorious majesty is the cause why many are so rude and slovenly in their gesture, so saucy and irreverently familiar with God in their expressions.—We are bid to *be sober, watching unto prayer*. Truly there is an insobriety in our very language, when we do not clothe the desires of our hearts with such humble expressions, as may signify the awe and dread of his sacred Majesty in our hearts.

In a word, the reason why men dare come reeking out of the adulterous embraces of their lusts, and stretch forth their unwashed hands to heaven in prayer; whence is it, but because they know not God to be of such infinite purity, as will have no fellowship with the workers of iniquity? *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself*, Psal. l. 21.

Thirdly, We must understand the matter of our prayers, what we beg, what we deprecate, without which, we cannot in faith say Amen to our own prayers, but may soon ask that which neither becomes us to desire, nor is honourable for God to give.

This Christ rebuked, when she in the gospel put up her ambitious request for her children, to be set one at the right hand, and the other at the left hand of Christ in his kingdom. God never gave us leave thus to indite our own prayers, by the dictate of our private spirit, but hath bound us up to ask only what he hath promised to give.

Fourthly, A knowledge of the manner how we are to pray, as in whose name, and what qualifications are required in the prayer and person praying.

We find Paul begging prayers, that ye strive together with me in your prayers; in another place he tells us of a lawful striving, 2 Tim. ii. 5. There is a law of prayer, which must be observed,

or we come not at our own adventure; even in false worship they go by some rule in their addresses to their gods; therefore those smattering Samaritans, 2 Kings xvii. 26. when a plague was on them, concluded the reason to be, because they knew not the manner of the God of the land. The true God will be served in due order, or else expect a breach.

A word or two for application of this branch.

SECT. III.—*Use* 1. First, How few, then, pray in spirit? were this the only character to try many by, would they not be cast over the bar for mere babblers? as first, those in the popish church, where most know not a word that they say in prayer.—If it be such a weakness to subscribe a petition to the king, or to a parliament, which we never read or understood; what shall we then think of such brutish prayers as these, sent to heaven, and endorsed with an ignoramus on the back of them? yea, amongst yourselves, many, who though they pray in their mother-language, yet are as ignorant as the matter of their prayers, how else could they patter over the creed and commandments, with their blind devotion, instead of prayers? Are there more deplored ruins of mankind to be found among the Indians than such? Yea, when they join with their minister in prayer, neither know that God to whom the prayer is directed, nor the mediator under the favour of whose name it is presented. Before Nebuchadnezzar could bless God, he had the understanding of a man given him, which these yet want. Do you not think such ignorant wretches as these might be easily persuaded to kneel before an image gaudily dressed up, or to put their letter into some angel or saint's hand for dispatch, being made to believe, that it will find a kinder welcome by the mediation of such favourites! Oh what a darkness is there even at this day upon the face of our waters! on which had but the Pope's instruments opportunity to sit brooding a while, they might soon bring their desired work to a perfection among the multitude of ignorant souls that are amidst us: We see there is need not only to stir up our people to pray, but to help them to knowledge how they may pray, or else we send them before they have learned their errand; as if we should call a child to read before he hath learned his letters.

Use 2. Secondly, It speaks to all that are at any time the mouth to God for others in prayer, so to pray, that those who join with them may clearly understand what they put up to God for them.

Who is more to be blamed, he that prayeth in an unknown tongue, or he that with such uncouth phrases, and high-flown expressions, as are not understood by half the company? Suppose thine own spirit prays, as the apostle saith, yet thine understanding is unfruitful unto them; they, alas, are at a loss, and stand gazing,

gazing, as the disciples did, when the cloud parted Christ from them.

Either come down from thy high towering expressions, or help them up to thee. They may say of thee, as those of Moses, *We know not what is become of the man.* No wonder, if while they cannot keep sight of the matter in hand, that their thoughts rove and dance about some object of their own framing. Dost thou pray to be admired for thy rolling tongue, height of gifts, or the like? Perhaps thou mayest have this thy reward of some ignorant ones, and others that would as fain commend themselves upon the same account; but consider what a low and base end thou propoundest in so high a service, unworthy of a Christian's thought. What? no net to fish with for thy credit and applause but a sacred ordinance? The worship which Christ made in the gospel belongs to thy back. Our blessed Saviour, that was all on fire with zeal to see his house of prayer made a house of merchandize, O how doth his soul loathe the baseneness of thy mercenary spirit, who dost the same, though in another dress!

CHAP. III.

Shews, To Praying in the Spirit is required Fervency; and two Reasons why this is required.

THE second thing required in praying with our spirit is, fervency.

The soul keeps the body warm while it is in it; so much as there is of our soul and spirit in a duty, so much heat and fervency. If the prayer be cold, we may certainly conclude the heart is idle, and bears no part in the duty. Our spirit is an active creature, what it doth is with force, whether bad or good. Hence in scripture, to set the heart and soul upon a thing imports vehemency and fervour; thus the poor labouring man is said to *set his heart on his wages*, Deut. xxiv. 15. the hopes of what he shall have at night makes him sweat at his work in the day. Nebuchadnezzar *set his heart on Daniel to deliver him*, Dan. vi. When the spirit of a man is set about a work, he will do it to purpose; *If thou shalt seek the Lord with all thy heart and all thy soul*, Deut. iv. 29. that is fervently.

This consists not in a violent agitation of the bodily spirits; a man may put his body into a sweat in duty, and the prayer be cold; that is the fervent prayer that flows from a warm heart, and enkindled affection: like an exhalation which is first set on

fire in the cloud, and then breaks forth into thunder; *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire kindled, then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end,* Psal. xxxix 3, 4.

Now as zeal is not one single affection, but the edge and vehemency of them all; so fervency in prayer is when all the affections act strongly and suitably to the several parts of prayer.

In confession, when the soul melts into a holy shame and sorrow for the sins he spreads before the Lord, so that he feels a holy smart and pain within, and doth not act a tragical part with a comical heart; for, as Chrysostom saith, *To paint tears is worse than to paint the face.* Here is true fervency, *I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise,* Psal. lv. 2. There may be fire in the pan, when none in the piece; a loud wind, but no rain with it. David made a noise with his voice, and mourned in his spirit.

So in petition: when the heart is drawn out with vehement desires of the grace it prays for, not some wouldings or wishings, or weak valleities, but passionate breathings and breakings of heart, sometimes set out by the violence of thirst, which is thought more tormenting than that of hunger. As the hunted hart pants after the cool waters, so did David's soul after God, Psal. xlii. Sometimes by the straining of a wrestler, so Jacob is said to wrestle with the angel; and of those that run in a race, Acts xxvi. 7. *Instantly serving God day and night; en ekteneia,* they stretched out themselves. *My soul breaketh for longing,* Psal. cxix. 20. as one that with straining breaks a vein.

Quest. But why must we thus pray in the spirit fervently?

Answ. First, From the command, *Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy strength, with all thy might, and his word shall be in thy heart;* which imports the affectionate performance of every command and duty.

Sever the outward from the inward part of God's worship, and he owns it not; *Who hath required this at your hand?* said God to them that were enough prodigal of their sacrifices, Isa. i. 12. as if he had said, Did I ever command you to give a beast's heart in sacrifice, and keep back your own? Why dost thou pray at all? Wilt thou say, Because he commands it? then why not fervently, which the command intends chiefly? When you send for a book, would you be pleased with him that brings only the cover? and will God accept the skin for the sacrifice? the external part of the duty is but as the cup—thy love, faith, and joy, are the wine he desires to taste of; without these, thou givest him but an empty cup to drink in; now what is this but to mock him?

Secondly, To comport with the name of God.

The

The common description of prayer is calling on the name of God. Now, as in prayer we call upon the name of God, so it must be with a worship suitable to his name, or else we pollute it, and incur his wrath; this is the chief meaning of the third commandment: In the first, God provides that none besides himself, the only true God, be worshipped; in the second, that he the true God be not served with will-worship, but his own institutions; and in the third, that he be not served vainly and slightly in his own worship. There is no attribute in God but calls for this fervency in his worship.

First, He is a great and glorious God, and as such, it becomes us to approach his presence with our affections in their best array.

Are yawning prayers fit for a great God's hearing? darest thou speak to such a Majesty before thou art well awake, and hast such a sacrifice prepared as he will accept? "Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing. For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." See here, first, any thing less than the best we have, is a corrupt thing; he will accept a little, if the best; but he abhors thou shouldst save the best for another.

Again, He that offers not the best, the strength of his affections, is a deceiver, because he robs him of his due, and he is a great God. It is fit the prince's table should be served with the best that the market affords, and not the refuse. When Jacob intended a present to the governor of the land, he bids his children *take of the best of the fruit of the land in their vessels.*

Lastly, The awful thought which God extorts from the very heathen by his mighty works, do reproach us, who live in the bosom of the church, and despise his name by our heedless and heartless serving of him.

Secondly, He is the living God.

Is a dead-hearted prayer a sacrifice suitable to a living God? how can that be accepted of him, which never came from him? Lay not your dead prayers by his side, the lively prayer is his, the dead thine own. What the Psalmist saith of such persons, we may say of prayers. *The living, the living, they shall praise him.* The glorious angels, who for their zeal are called seraphims, and a flame of fire, these he chuseth to minister to him in heaven; and the saints below (who though they sojourn on earth, yet have their extraction from heaven, so have spirits raised and refined from the dulness of their earthly constitution), these he sets apart for himself as priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto him. The quicker any one is himself, the more offensive

offensive is a dull leaden-heeled messenger, or slow-handed workman to him.

How then can God, who is all life, brook thy lazy listless devotions? When he commanded the neck of an ass to be broke, and not offered up unto him, was it because he was angry with the beast? no sure, it was his own workmanship, no other than himself made it; but to teach us, how unpleasing a dull heart is to him in his service.

Thirdly, He is a loving God, and love will be paid in no coin but its own.

Give God love for love, or he accounts you give him nothing. *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, John xiv. And, *If a man would give the substance of his house for love, it would be contemned*, Cant. viii. 7. So, if a man thinks to commute with God and give him any thing in prayer instead of his love and fervent affection, it will be contemned. Let the prayer be never so pithy, the posture of the body never so devout, the voice never so loud, if the affections of the heart be not drawn out after God in the duty, he disdains and rejects it, because it doth not correspond with the dear affections which God expresseth to us; he draws out his heart with his purse, and gives his very soul and self with all his gifts to his people, therefore he expects our hearts should come with all our services to him. It is no wonder to see the servant, whose master is hard and cruel, have no heart to, or mettle in, his work; but love in the master useth to put life into the servant; and therefore God, who is incomparably the best master, disdains to be served as none but the worst among men use to be.

CHAP. IV.

Contains a Third Reason of the Point, and also shews how few Pray in the Spirit.

THIRDLY, The promise is only to fervent prayer.

A still-born child is no heir, neither is a prayer that wants life heir to any promise. Fervency is to prayer what fire is to the spices in the censer—without this, it cannot ascend as incense before God. Some have attempted a shorter cut to the Indies by the north, but were ever frozen up in their way; and so will all sluggish prayers be served. It were an easy voyage indeed to heaven, if such prayers might find the way thither; but never could they shew any of that good land's gold who prayed thus,

thus, though he were a saint. The righteous man indeed is declared heir, as to all other promises, so to this of having his prayer heard; but he hath not *aptitudinem intrandi;* he is not in a fit posture to enter into the possession of this promise, or claim present benefit from it, while his heart remains cold and formal in the duty.

There is a qualification to the act of prayer as necessary as of the person praying; *The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.*

When God intends a mercy for his people, he stirs up a spirit of prayer in them. *I never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain:* that is, I never stirred them up to it, and helped them in it, and then let them lose their labour. *Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I shall hearken unto you. Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall seek for me with all your heart,* Jer. xxix. 12. Feeble desires, like weak pangs, go over, and bring not a mercy to the birth. As the full time grows nearer, so the spirit of prayer grows stronger. *Shall he not avenge the elect that cry day and night unto him? I tell you he will avenge them speedily,* Luke xviii. 7. None in the house perhaps will stir for a little knock at the door, they think he is some idle beggar, or one in no great haste; but if he raps thick and loud, then they go, yea, out of their beds; Luke xi. 8. *Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity.*

Use 1. First, This sadly shews there is little true praying to be found among us, because few that pray fervently.

Let us sort men into their several ranks:

1. The ignorant.

Do these pray fervently? their hearts, alas, must needs be frozen up in the duty, they dwell too far from the sun, to have any of this divine heat in their devotions.

2. The prophane person that is debauched with his filthy lusts, his heat runs out another way.

Can the heart which is inflamed with lusts be any other than cold in prayer? hell-fire must be quenched, before this from heaven can be kindled.

3. The soul under the power of roving thoughts, whose mind (like satan) is walking to and fro in the earth, while his eyes seem nailed to heaven; can he be fervent? can the affections be intended, and the mind inattentive?

Fervency unites the soul, and gathers in the thoughts to the work in hand; it will not suffer diversions, but answers all foreign thoughts, as Nehemiah, in another case, did them that would have called him off from building, *I am about a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease?*

Neh.

Neh. vi. 3. It is said of Elias, *he prayed earnestly*: he prayed in praying, so the Greek; as in Ezekiel's vision, there was a wheel in a wheel, so a prayer in his prayer. Whereas the roving soul is prayerless, his lips pray, and his mind plays; his eye is up to heaven, as if that were his mark, but he shoots his thoughts down to the earth.

4. He to whom the duty is tedious and wearisome, who doth not sigh and groan in the duty, but under it; who prays as a sick man works in his calling, finding no delight or joy in it. True fervency suffers no weariness, feels no pain. The tradesman when hot at his work, and the soldier in the fight, the one feels not his weariness, nor the other his wounds. Affections are strong things, able to pull up a weak body. Therefore he that shrugs at a duty, and turns this way and that way, as a sick man from one side of his bed to the other for ease, shews he hath little content in the duty, and therefore less zeal. These aches of the spirit in prayer (though he be a saint) come of some cold that he hath gotten, and declare him to be under a great distemper. A man in health finds not more savour in his food, and refreshing from it, than the Christian doth in the offices of religion, when his heart is in the right temper.

CHAP. V.

Some moving Arguments to enkindle our Zeal and Fervency in Prayer.

Use 2. SECONDLY, For exhortation.

Dost thou pray? Pray fervently, or thou dost nothing. Cold prayer is no more prayer than painted fire is fire. That prayer which warms not thine own heart, will it, thinkest thou, move God's? thou drawest the tap, but the vessel is frozen. A man hath not the use of his hand clung up with cold, neither canst thou have the use of thy spirit in duty, till thy heart be chased into some sense and feeling of what thou prayest for.—Now to bring thy cold heart into some spiritual heat,

SECT. I.—First, Consider the excellency of zeal and fervency.

If a saint, thou hast a principle that inclines thee to approve of things that are excellent; and such is this. Life is the excellency of beings; yea, even in inanimate creatures, there is an analogical life, and therein consists their excellency. The spirit of wine commends it; what is it worth when dead and flat? In the diamond,

diamond, the sparkle gives the worth; in fountain-water, that which makes it more excellent than other is its motion, called therefore *living water;* much more in beings that have true life; for this, the flea or fly are counted nobler creatures than the sun. The higher kind of life that beings have, their nature is thereby more advanced, beasts above plants, men above beasts, and angels above men.

Now as life gives the excellency to being, so vivacity and vigour in operating gives excellency to life. Indeed the nobler the life of the creature is, the more energy is in its actings; the apprehension of an angel is quicker, and zeal stronger, than in a man. So that the more lively thou art in thy duty, and the more zeal thou expressest therein, the nearer thou comest to the nature of these glorious spirits, who for their zeal in the service of God are called *a flame of fire.* I confess, to be calm and cool in inferior things, and in our own matters betwixt man and man, is better than zeal; so Solomon saith, Prov. xvii. 27. *A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit,* in the Hebrew; it is a cool spirit, injuries do not put him into a flame, neither do any occurrences in the world heat him to any height of joy, grief, or anger. Who more temperate in these than Moses; but set this holy man to pray, he is fire and tow, all life and zeal.

Indeed it is one excellency of this fervency of spirit in prayer, that it allays all sinful passions. David's fervency in praying for his child when alive, made him bear the tidings of his death so calmly and patiently. We hear not an angry word that Hannah replies to her scolding companion Peninnah, and why? but because she had found the art of easing her troubled spirit in prayer; what need she contend with her adversary, who could, by wrestling with God, persuade him to espouse her quarrel? and truly were there nothing else to commend fervency of spirit in prayer, this is enough, that like David's harp, it can charm the evil spirit of our passions, which in their excess the saint counts great sins, and I am sure finds them grievous troubles. When are you more placid and serene, than when with most life and fervour your souls can mount up in the flame of your sacrifices into the bosom of God? Possibly you may come, like Moses, down the mount with greater heat, but it will be against sin, not for self; whereas a formal prayer, like a plaister which hath good ingredients in it, yet being laid cold upon the wound, hurts it, rather than heals it.

SECT. II.—Secondly, God deserves the prime and strength of thy soul should be bestowed on him in thy prayers.

1. He gave thee the powers of thy soul, and all thy affections. According to the mould, so is the statue that is cast in it: such thou art, as thou wert in the idea of the divine mind. Now may

not

not thy Maker call for that which was his gift? He that made the stone an inanimate being, and confined the narrow souls of brutes to act upon some low sensitive good, ennobleth thee with a rational appetite and spiritual affections. Now wilt thou not employ those divine powers in the worship of thy God, from whom thou hadst them? this were hard indeed? that God should be denied what himself gave, and not suffered to taste of his own cost: *I came to my own*, saith Christ, *and they would not receive me.* Thus here, I came to my own creature, he had his life from me, and brings a dead heart unto me. Suppose a friend should give you notice, that he will ere long be at your house, and send you in before-hand a vessel of rich wine, would you, when he comes, grudge to broach it for his entertainment, and put him off with that which is dead and flat? Expectest thou a better friend to be thy guest than God?

The Psalmist calls upon us to *serve the Lord with gladness;* and what is his enforcement? *Know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that made us*, Psal. c. Who plants a vineyard, and looks not to drink of the wine? If God calls our corn and wine his, he therefore expects to be served with them; much more with our love and joy, for surely he allows us not to alienate the best of his gifts from him. When thou art therefore going to pray, call up thy affections, which haply are asleep on some creature's lap, as Jonah in the sides of the ship, *Awake, sleeper, and call upon thy God.*

2. He deserves thy affections, because he gives thee his.

He is jealous of thee, because he is zealous for thee. Well may he complain of thy cold dreaming prayers, whose heart is on a flame of love to thee. High and admirable are the expressions with which he sets forth his dear love to his people, whatever he doth for them is with a zeal; *in protecting of them, as birds flying, so will the Lord defend Jerusalem;* that is, swiftly, as a bird flies full speed to her nest, when she perceives her young is in danger; *in avenging them* of their enemies, *the zeal of the Lord shall perform it; in hearing their prayers*, he doth it with delight; *in forgiving their sins*, he is ready to forgive, multiplies to pardon; when they ask one talent, he gives them two.

Jacob desires a safe ingress and regress, he doth this, and more than he desired, for he brings him home with two bands; not the least mercy he gives, but he draws forth his soul and heart with it; even in his afflicting providences, where he seems to shew least love, there his heart overflows with it; *What shall I do unto thee, O Ephraim? my bowels are turned within me.*

3. He is a good pay-master for his people's zeal.

Heb. xi. 6. *He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Never did fervent prayer find cold welcome with him. Elijah's

Elijah's prayer fetched fire from heaven, because it carried fire to heaven; the tribe of Levi for their zeal were preferred to the priesthood, and why? surely they who were so zealous in doing justice on their brethren, would be no less zealous in making atonement for them by their sacrifices. Most men lose the fervency and strength of their desires by displacing them—they are zealous for such things as cannot, and persons that oft will not pay them for their pains: O how hot is the covetous man in his chace after the world's pelf! *He pants after the dust of the earth;* and that *upon the heads of the poor*; but what reward hath he for his labour? after all his getting, like the dogs in pursuit of the hare, he misseth his game, and at last goes often poor and supperless to bed in his grave; to be sure, *he dies a fool*, Jer. xvii. 11. How many court-spaniels (that have fawned and flattered, yea, licked up their master's spittle, and all for some scraps of preferment) have befooled themselves, when at last they have seen their creeping sordid practices rewarded with the fatal stroke of the hangman, or a lingering consumptive death in their prince's favour; which made that ambitious Cardinal say too late, if he had been as observant of his heavenly master as he had been of his earthly, he should not have been left so miserable at last.

In a word, do we not see the superstitious person knocking his breast, and cutting his own flesh, out of a zeal to his wooden god, that hath neither ear to hear, nor hand to help him? Now doth not the living God, thy loving Father, deserve thy zeal more than their dead and dumb idols do theirs? For shame, let not us be cold in his worship, when the idolater sweats before his god of clouts; let not the worldling's zeal, in pursuit of his earthly mammon, leave thee lagging behind with a headless heartless serving of thy God; neither fear the world's hooting at thee for thy zeal; they think thee a fool, but thou knowest them to be so.

CHAP. VI.

Something laid down by way of Help, to raise our Affections in Prayer.

Quest. BUT how may we get this fervency of spirit in prayer?

Answ. 1. Thou who propoundest the question, art a saint or not?

If not, there is another question must precede this, How thou, that art at present in a state of spiritual death, mayest have life? There

There must be life in the soul, before there can be life in the duty. All the rugs in the upholsterer's shop will not fetch a dead man to warmth, nor any arguments, though taken from the most moving topics in the scripture, will make thee pray fervently, while thy soul lies in a dead state. Go first to Christ, that thou mayest have life, and having life, then there is hope to chase thee into some heat.

But secondly, If thou beest a saint, it yet calls for thy utmost care to get, and when thou hast got, to keep thy soul in a kindly heat.

As the stone cannot of itself mount up into the air, so the bird (though it can do this, yet) cannot stay there long, without some labour and motion with its wings. The saints have a spark of heavenly fire in their bosom, but this needs the bellows of their care and diligence to keep it alive. There is a rust that breeds from gold, a worm from the wood, a moth from the garment, that in time waste them, and ashes from the coal, that choaks the fire; yea, and in the saint too, which will damp his zeal, if not cleared by daily watchfulness.

Observe, therefore, what is thy chief impediment to fervency in prayer, and set thyself vigorously against it; if thou beest remiss in this precedaneous duty, thou wilt be much more remiss in prayer itself. He that knows of a slough in the way, and mends it not before he takes his journey, hath no cause to wonder when his chariot is laid fast in it.

Now this is not the same in all, and therefore it is necessary that thou beest so much acquainted with thine own estate, as to know what is thy great clog in this duty. Certainly were not the firmament of the saint's soul cooled with some malignant vapours, that arise from within his own breast, and weaken the force of divine grace in him, it would be summer all the year long with him, his heart would be ever warm, and his affections lively in duty. Look, therefore, narrowly, whence thy cooling comes; perhaps thy heart is too much let out upon the world in the day, and at night thy spirits are spent, when thou shouldst come before the Lord in prayer. If thou wilt be hotter in duty, thou must be colder towards the world. A horse that carrieth a pack all day, is unfit to go post at night; wood that hath the sap in it will not easily burn; neither will thy heart readily take fire in holy duties, who comest so sopped in the world to them; drain, therefore, thy heart of these eager affections to that, if thou meanest to have them warm and lively in this.

Now no better way for this, than to set thy soul under the frequent meditation of Christ's love to thee, thy relation to him, with the great and glorious things thou expectest from him in another world; this or nothing will dry up thy love to this world,

world, as your wood which is laid a sunning is made fit for the fire; whereas let your hearts continue soaking in the thoughts of an inordinate love to the world, and you will find, when you come to pray, that thy heart will be in a duty even as a foggy wet log at the back of a fire, long in kindling, and soon out again. Haply the deadness of thy heart in prayer, ariseth from want of a deep sense of thy wants, and the mercies thou desirest to have supplied. Couldst thou but pray feelingly, no doubt but thou wouldst pray fervently. The hungry man needs no help from art to learn him how to beg, his pinched bowels make him earnest and eloquent. Is it pardon of sin thou wouldst pray for?

First, See what anguish of spirit they put thee to; do with thy soul as the chirurgeon with his patient's wounds, who syringeth them with some sharp searching water, to try what sense he hath of them. Apply such considerations to thy soul as may make thee feel their smart, and be sensible of thy deplorable estate by reason of them; then go and sleep at prayer, if thou canst. We have David first affecting his heart, and expressing the dolour of his soul for his sin, Psal. xxxviii. *Mine iniquities have gone over my head as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me;* now when his heart is sick with these thoughts, as one with strong physic working in his stomach, he pours out his soul in prayer to God, *All my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee*, ver. 8.

Art thou to pray for others? First, pierce thy heart through with their sorrows, and by a spirit of sympathy bring thyself to feel their miseries, as if thou wert in their case; then will thy heart be warm in prayer for them, when it flows from a heart melted in compassion to them; thus we read Christ troubled himself for Lazarus, before he lifted up his eyes to heaven for him, John xi. 35. 38. compared.

Again, It may be thy want of zeal proceeds from a defect in thy faith; faith is the back of steel to the bow of prayer, this sends the arrow with a force to heaven; where faith is weak, the cry will not be strong. He that goes about a business with little hope to speed, will do it but faintly; he works, as we say, for a dead horse. 'Tis a true axiom, *Voluntas non fertur in impossibilia*, the less we hope, the less we endeavour. We read of strong cries that Christ put up in the days of his flesh; now mark what enforced his prayer, *unto him that was able to save him;* and not only so, but if we look back into that prayer to which this refers, you shall find he clasped about God as his God, *My God, my God;* his hold on God held up his spirit in prayer.

So in the several precedents of praying saints on scripture record, you may see how the spirit of prayer ebbed and flowed, fell and rose, as their faith was up and down. This made David

press so hard upon God in the day of his distress, *I believed, therefore I spake; I was greatly afflicted*, Psal. cxvi. This made the woman of Canaan so invincibly importunate; let Christ frown and chide, deny and rebuke her, she yet makes her approaches nearer and nearer, gathering arguments from his very denials, as if a soldier should shoot back his enemy's bullets upon him again; and Christ tells what kept up her spirit undaunted, *O woman, great is thy faith!*

Lastly, May be it proceeds from some distate thou hast given to the Holy Spirit, who alone can blow up thy affections, and then no wonder thou art cold in prayer, when he is gone that should keep thy heart warm at it. What is the body without the soul, but cold clay, dead earth? And what the soul without the spirit? Truly no better. O invite him back to thy soul, or else thy praying work is at an end; and if thou wouldst persuade him to return, observe what was the thing that distasted him, and remove it; that which makes this dove forsake its lockyers, will hinder his return, if not taken away.

CHAP. VII.

The Third Thing required to Pray with our Spirit, viz. Sincerity, wherein it consists, and how necessary, shewn.

3. THE third thing required to praying with our spirit is, Sincerity.

There may be much fervour where there is little or no sincerity; and this strange fire, the heat of a distemper, not the kindly natural heat of the new creature, which both comes from God, and acts for God; whereas the other is from self, and ends in self. Indeed the fire which self kindles, serves only to warm the man's own hands by it that makes it; *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks*, Isa. l. The prophet represents them as sitting down about the fire they had made. Self-acting and self-aiming ever go together; therefore our Saviour with *Spirit* requires *Truth*, John iv. 24. *He seeketh such to worship him as will worship him in spirit and in truth.*

Quest. But wherein consists this sincere fervency?

Answ. Zeal intends the affections, sincerity directs their end, and consists in their purity and incorruption.

The blood is often hot when none of the purest, and the affections strong when the heart insincere; therefore the apostle ex-

horts us, that *we love one another out of a pure mind fervently*, 1 Pet. i. 22. and speaks in another place of *sorrowing after a godly sort*, that is, sincerely. Now the sincerity of the heart in prayer then appears, when a person is real in his prayers, and that from pure principles to pure ends.

First, When he is real in what he presents to God in prayer, the index of his tongue without, and the clock-work of his heart within go together; he doth not declaim against a sin with his lips, which he favours with his heart; he doth not make a loud cry for that grace, which he would be sorry to have granted him. This is the true badge of a hypocrite, who often would be loth God should take him at his word; a dismal day it will be to such, who, when God shall bring in their own conscience to witness against them, that their hearts never signed and sealed the requests which they made. There is a state policy used sometimes by princes, to send ambassadors, and set treaties on foot, when nothing less than peace is intended; such a deceit is to be found in the false heart of man, to blind and cover secret purposes of war and rebellion against God, with fair overtures in prayer to him for peace.

Secondly, When the person is not only real in what he desires, but this from a pure principle to a pure end.

I doubt not but a hypocrite in confession may have a real trouble upon his spirit for his sins, and cordially, yea passionately, desire his pardoning mercy, but not from a pure principle, a hatred of sin, but an abhorrence of wrath he sees hastening to him for it; not for a pure end, that the glory of God's mercy may be magnified in and by him, but that himself may not be tormented by God's just wrath. He may desire the graces of his spirit, but not out of any love to them, but only as an expedient, without which he knows to hell he must go; as a sick man in exquisite torture (suppose of the stone or some other acute disease) calls for some potion he loathes, because he knows he cannot have ease except he drinks it; whereas the sincere soul desires grace, not only as physic, but food; he craves it not only as necessary, but as sweet to his palate; the intrinsical bonity and excellence of holiness inflames him with such love to it, that, as one taken with the beauty of a virgin, saith, he will marry her, though he hath nothing with her but the clothes to her back; so the sincere heart would have holiness, though it brought no other advantages with it, than what is found in its own lovely nature. So much to shew what sincerity in prayer is.

Now he that would pray acceptably, must pray thus in his spirit, that is, with sincerity of his spirit; *The prayer of the upright is his delight*. Nadab and Abihu brought fire, and had fire, a strange fire to destroy them for the strange fire they had

offered, Lev. x. i.; and such is all fervency and zeal, that is not taken from the altar of a sincere heart.

The fervent prayer, it can do much, but it must be of a righteous man, and such the sincere man only is. And no wonder that God stands so much upon sincerity in prayer, seeing the lip of truth is so prized even among men; nature hath taught men to commend their words to others, by laying their hands on their breasts, as an assurance that what they say or promise is true and cordial; which the penitent publican, it is like, aimed at, Luke xviii. 13. *he smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner,* thereby declaring whence his sorrowful confession came.

That light which told the heathens that God must be worshipped, informed them also, this worship must come from the inward recesses of the heart; *In sancto quid tacit aurum—quid damus id superis*, &c. What care the gods for gold, let us offer that which is more worth than all treasures, *sanctos recessus animi*, the heart and inward affections of it. It is a strange custom, Benzo, in his *Historia Novi Orbis*, relates of the natives there, *Indi occidentales dum sacra faciunt, dimisso in gutter bacillo, vomitum cient, ut Idolo ostendant, nihil se in pectore mali occultum gerere:* When worshipping their gods, they used, by putting a little stick down their throat, to provoke them to vomit, thereby shewing their idol, that they carried no secret evil within them. I should not have named this barbarous custom, but to shew how deeply this notion is engraven on the natural conscience, that we must be sincere in the worship of God.

Use. Let it put us upon the trial, whether we thus pray in the spirit, whether you can find sincerity stamped on your fervency; if the prayer be not fervent it cannot be sincere, but it may have a fervour without this. This is a very fine *sive*, approve thyself here, and thou mayest without presumption write thyself a saint; but how fervent soever thou art without sincerity, it matters not; nay, zeal without uprightness is worse than key-cold; none will go to hell with more shame than the false-hearted zealot, who mounts up towards heaven in the fiery chariot, a seeming zeal, but at last is found a devil in Samuel's mantle, and so is thrown down like lightning from heaven, whither he would have been thought by his neighbours to be going. Be not loth to be searched, there will then need no further search to prove thee unsound; if God's officer be denied entrance, all is not right within. Now to help thee in the work enquire:

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Rules laid down for Trial of the Sincerity of our Hearts in Prayer, with a Help or Two towards the getting of this Grace.

SECT. I. FIRST, What is thy care in performing this duty of prayer in secret?

If thy heart be sincere, it will delight in privacy. A false heart calls others to see his zeal for God. May be he is forward to put himself upon duty, where he hath spectators to applaud him, and can be very hot and earnest at the work; but either he is wholly a stranger to secret prayer, or else he is cold in the performance; he finds himself becalmed, now he wants the breath of others to fill his sails. The plummets are off which quickened his motion, and he moves heavily to what he did before company. Whereas a sincere Christian never finds more freedom of spirit, and liquefactions of soul, than in his solitary addresses to God.

Joseph, when he would give full vent to his passion, sought some secret place where to weep, and therefore retired to his chamber, Gen. xliii. so the sincere Christian goes to his closet, and there easeth his heart into the bosom of God, and lets his passions of sorrow for sin, and love to Christ, burst forth and have their full scope, which in public prayer he restrains (as to the outward expression of them) out of a holy modesty, and fear of being observed by others, which he hunts not for.

Now speak, Christian, what is thy temper? Can thy closet witness for thee in this particular? It is the trick of a hypocrite to strain himself to the utmost in duty, when he hath spectators, and to draw loose in his geers when alone; like some that carry their best meat to market, and save the worst for their own food at home; and others that draw their best wine to their customers, but drink the dead and flat themselves at their own private table.

Secondly, Observe thyself in thy more public addresses to the throne of grace, and that in two particulars.

1. When thou prayest before others.

2. When thou joinest with others that pray.

1. When thou prayest before others; observe on what thou bestowest thy chief care and zeal, whether in the externals or internals of prayer, that which is exposed to the eye and ear of men, or that which should be prepared for the eye and ear of God; the devout posture of thy body, or the inward devotion of thy soul; the pomp of thy words, or the power of thy faith; the agitation of thy bodily spirits in the vehemency of thy voice, or

the fervency of thy spirit in heart-breaking affections. These inward workings of thy soul in prayer, are the very soul of prayer, and all the care about the other, without this, is like the trimming bestowed upon a dead body, that will not make the carcase sweet, nor these thy prayer to God's nostrils. It is the faith, love, brokenness of heart for sin, and the inward affections exerted in prayer, that, like Elijah in his fiery chariot, mount up to God in heaven, while the other, with the prophet's mantle, fall to the ground.

The sincere soul dares not be rude in his outward posture, he is careful of his very words and phrases, that they be grave and pertinent, neither would he pray them asleep that join with him, by a cold, dreaming, and lazy manner of delivering it; but still it is the inward disposition of his heart he principally looks to, knowing well, that by the other he is but a cook to others, and may fast himself, if his own heart be idle in the duty; and therefore he doth not count he prays well (though to the affecting of their hearts) except he finds his own affections drawn out in the duty. Whereas the hypocrite, if he may but come off the duty with the applause of others in the external performance, is very well pleased, though he be conscious of the deadness and naughtiness of his own heart therein.

2. When thou joinest with another that prayeth. Do the gifts and graces that breathe from others in prayer, warm thy affections, and draw out thy soul to bear them company to heaven in the petitions they put up? or do they stir up a secret envying and repining at the gifts of God bestowed on them? This would discover much pride and unsoundness in thy spirit. The hypocrite is proud, and thinks all the water spilt and lost that runs besides his own mill: Whereas the sincere soul prizeth the gifts of others, can heartily bless God for them, and makes a humble and holy use of them; his heart it is as much affected with the holy savoury requests that another puts up, as when they come out of his own mouth. But the hyprocite's eye is evil, because God's is good.

SECT. II.—Observe whether thy fervency in prayer be uniform.

A false heart may seem very hot in praying against one sin, but he can skip over another, and either leaves it out of his confession, or handles it very gently; as a partial witness that would fain save the prisoner's life he comes against, will not speak all he knows, but he minceth his evidence; thus doth the hypocrite deal with his darling lust, is like one that mows down grass with a gapped scythe, some he cuts down, and other he leaves standing; vehement against this, and favourable to that lust; whereas sincerity

sincerity makes clear work as it goes. *Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me*, Psal. cxix. 132.

Again, The false heart is as uneven in his petitions as in his deprecations; very earnest is he for some mercies, and they are commonly of an inferior nature, but more indifferent in his desires for those that are greater; he tithes mint and cummin in his prayers (temporal mercies I mean), but neglects the weightier things of the promise, the sanctifying graces of the spirit, humility, heavenly-mindedness, contentation, self-denial, a little of these upon a knife's point will content him.

Fourthly, Observe whether thy endeavours correspond with thy prayers.

The false heart seems hot in prayer, but you will find him cold enough at work; he prays very fiercely against his sins, as if he desired them to be all slain upon the place; but what doth he towards the speeding of them with his own hands? Doth he set himself upon the work of mortification? Doth he withdraw the fuel that feeds them? Is he careful to shun occasions that may ensnare him? When temptations come, do they find him in arms upon his guard, resolved to resist their motion? Alas, no such matter; if a few good words in prayer will do the work, well and good; but as for any more, he is too lazy to go about it. Whereas the sincere heart is not idle after prayer, when it hath given heaven the alarm, and called God in to his help, then he takes the field himself, and opposeth his lusts with all his might, watching their motions, and taking every advantage he meets with to fall upon them, every mercy he receives, he beats it out into a weapon to knock down all thoughts of sinning again. Thus Ezra, chap. ix. *Seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?* O God forbid, saith the holy soul, that he should bid such a thought welcome; every promise he reads he lifts it up as a sword for his defence against this enemy. *Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves*, 2 Cor. vii. 1.

I shall shut up this head with a few directions how we may get this sincere heart in prayer.

SECT. III.—First, Get thy heart united by faith to Christ. It is faith that purifies the heart from its false principles and ends in duty. God made man upright; and while he stood so, his eye and foot went right, neither did his eye look, nor his foot tread awry; but after Eve had talked with the serpent, she and all mankind after her learned the serpent's crooked motion, to look one way, and go another; *God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions*, Eccl. vii. 29. O beg, therefore,

with David, that God would *renew a right spirit within thee,* Psal. li. What the evil spirit hath perverted, the Holy Spirit alone can set right. If the cause why a piece carries wrong, be in its make and mould, it must be new cast, or it will never carry right.

Hypocrisy in duty comes from the falseness of man's depraved nature, the heart therefore must be made new before it can be sincere. The new heart is the single heart, Ezek. xi. 19. *I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you.*— He that loves truth in the inward parts, can put it there.

Secondly, Make hypocrisy in prayer appear as odious to thee as possibly thou canst, and thou needest not dress it up in any other than its own clothes to do this.

Consider but how grievous a sin, and how great a folly it is, and methinks it were enough to set thee against it.

1. Consider what a grievous sin it is.

A lie spoken by one man to another, is a sin capable of high aggravations; what then is that lie which is uttered in prayer to God? Surely this must be much more horrid, for here is blasphemy in the untruth. God spares not to give the hypocrite the lie, Hos. xi. 12. *Ephraim encompasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit;* so many lies they told to God, as prayers they put up. O the patience of God, that doth not strike the hypocrite dead upon the place, while the lie is in his throat, as he did Ananias and Sapphira!

2. It is a great folly.

First, As it is infeasible. Who but a fool can think to blind the eyes of the Almighty? Canst thou cover the eye of the sun with thy hand or hat, that it shall not shine? As unable art thou to hide thy secret designs so close, that the great God should not see them.

Secondly, As it is impossible to deceive God, so thou puttest a woeful cheat upon thyself; thou thinkest thou mendest the matter by praying, and thou makest it worse; when thou comest on thy trial for thy life, thy hypocrisy in prayer will cost thee dearer than thy other sins; thou takest pains to increase thy condemnation: thou dost as Solomon saith of another kind of hypocrite, Prov. i. 17. *lay wait for thine own blood, and lurk privily for thine own life.* Of all sinners, the hypocrite has the precedency in God's purposes and preparations of wrath: Hell is prepared for them, as the first-born of damnation, Mat. xxiv. 51. Other sinners are said to have their portion with the hypocrites, as the younger brethren with their elder who is the heir.

Thirdly, Crucify thy affections to the world.

Hypocrisy in religion springs from the bitter root of some carnal affection unmortified. So long as thy prey lies below, thy eye

eye will be to the earth, even when thou seemest like an eagle to mount in thy prayers to heaven. The false heart does *uti Deo ut fruatur mundo*, he useth religion for secular ends, and makes his seeming piety to God but as a horsing-block to get into the creature's saddle; God is in his mouth, but the world is in his heart, which he projects to attain more easily by the reputation that this will gain him.

I have read of one that offered his prince a great sum of money, for no more but to have leave once or twice a-day to come into his presence, and only say, *God save your Majesty*; the prince, wondering at this large offer for so small a favour, asked him, What this would advantage him? O Sir, saith he, though I have nothing else at your hands, it will gain me a great name in the country for one that is a great favourite at court, and such an opinion will help me to more by the year's end, than I am out for the purchase. Thus some (it is to be feared) by the very name which they get for great saints among their neighbours, from their acquaintance with religious duties, do facilitate their carnal projects, and advance their worldly interests that lie at the bottom of all their goodly profession.

Well, Christian, this is but to play at small game; to fish for any of this world's petty enjoyments with religion's golden hook.

As thou lovest thy soul, and wouldst not lose this for ever, to get that which thou must lose after thou hast got it, mortify those carnal affections which thou findest most likely to withdraw thy heart from God. Thou knowest not God, if thou seest not enough in him to make thee happy, without the world's contribution; this, thoroughly believed, will make thee sincere in his service. *I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect*, said God to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1.

CHAP. IX.

Sheweth, the Acceptable Prayer is that which is in the Spirit, and what is required to Pray in the Holy Ghost.

HAVING dispatched the first importance of this phrase, *Praying in the Spirit*, viz. the spirit of the person that prayeth, and shewn, that then a person prays in the spirit, when his own soul and spirit acts in the duty, when he prays with understanding, fervency, and sincerity. Now we proceed to the second importance of the phrase, To pray in the spirit is, to pray in

in or with the spirit of God, Jude ver. 20. *Praying in the Holy Ghost.* So that the note to be insisted on, will be this:

Note, That to right praying it is necessary, that we pray in or by the Spirit of God.

Prayer it is the creature's act, but the Spirit's gift. There is a concurrence both of the Spirit of God, and the soul or spirit of the Christian to the performance of it. Hence we find both the Holy Spirit is said to pray in us, Rom. viii. 26. and we said to pray in him, Jude ver. 20. By the first is meant his inspiration, whereby he excites and assists the creature to and in the work; by the latter, the concurrence of the saint's faculties. The spirit doth not so pray in him, as that the Christian doth not exercise his own faculties in the duty, as the Familists fondly conceive.

In handling this point, I shall endeavour to do these three things:

First, I shall assert the point, and prove the truth of it.

Secondly, Explicate what it is to pray by the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, Make some application of the point.

SECT. I.—First, To assert the truth of the point, that to right praying it is necessary we pray by the Spirit of God.

This is clear from Eph. ii. 18. *Through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father;* mark these words, by one Spirit. As there is but one Mediator to appear and pray for us in heaven, so but one Spirit that can pray in us, and we by it on earth. We may as well venture to come to the Father through another mediator than the Son, as pray by another spirit than by the Holy Ghost. Therefore our Saviour, when he would shew the dislike of the disciples' rash motion, he doth it by telling them, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of*, Luke ix. 55. as if he had said, it behoves you to be well acquainted with the Spirit that actuates you in prayer, if your prayers be not breathed in and out by my Holy Spirit, they are abominable to me and my Father also. The name of Christ is not more necessary, than the Spirit of Christ is in prayer; Christ's name fits only the Spirit's mouth, it is too great a word for any to speak as he ought, that hath not the Spirit to help him: *None can say Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. xii. 13.

One may say the words, without any special work of the Spirit in him, and so may a parrot; but to say Christ is Lord believingly, with thoughts and affections comporting with the greatness thereof, requires the spirit of God to be in his heart and tongue. Now it is not the bare naming Christ in prayer, and saying, For the Lord's sake, that procures our welcome with God, but saying it in faith; and none can do this without the Spirit. Christ is the door that opens into God's presence, and lets the soul into his very bosom; faith is the key that unlocks the

the door; but the Spirit is he that makes this key, and helps the Christian to turn it in prayer, so as to get any access to God.

You know in the law it was a sin, not only to offer *strange incense*, but also to bring *strange fire*, Lev. x. 1. by the incense, which was a composition of sweet spices, appointed by God to be burnt as a sweet perfume in his nostrils, was signified the merit and satisfaction of Christ, who, being bruised by his Father's wrath, did offer up himself a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. By the fire that was put to the incense (which also was appointed to be taken from the altar, and not any common hearth) was signified the Spirit of God, by which we are to offer up all our prayers and praises, even as Christ offered himself up by the eternal Spirit. To plead Christ's merits in prayer, and not by the Spirit, is to bring right incense, but strange fire; and so our prayers are but smoke, offensive to his pure eyes, not incense of a sweet savour to his nostrils.

SECT. II.—Secondly, I proceed to explicate what it is to pray by the Spirit of God.

To the better opening of this, we must know, there are two ways that the Spirit of God helps persons in prayer; one way is by his gifts, the other by his grace.

First, The Spirit of God helps in prayer by his gifts.

Now those gifts which he furnisheth a person with for prayer, are either extraordinary or ordinary; the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in prayer were in the primitive times shed forth, whereby the apostles and others were able in a miraculous manner to pray as well as preach on a sudden, in a language that they never had learned: Of this gift, interpreters understand that passage of Paul, 1 Cor xiv. 15. *I will pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding also;* that is, he will make use of this extraordinary gift Christ had furnished him with, but so as he might edify the church by it, and no otherwise. This extraordinary gift was fitted for the infancy of the gospel-church, and ceased (as others of the like nature did) with it.

The ordinary gift of the Spirit in prayer is that special faculty whereby persons are enabled on a sudden to form the conceptions of their minds, and desires of their hearts, into apt words, before the Lord in prayer; this is a common gift, and is bestowed very often on those that are none of the best men; the hypocrite may have more of this gift than some sincere Christian. It is a gift that commonly bears proportion to natural endowments, a ready apprehension, fruitful fancy, voluble tongue, and audacity of spirit, which are all gifts of the Spirit, and do dispose a person for this. Now we see that the head may be ripe, and the heart rotten; and on the contrary, the heart sound and sincere, where the head is low-pated.

Secondly,

Secondly, The Spirit helps in prayer by his grace.

His gifts help to the outward expression, but his grace to the inward affection. By the gifts of the Spirit a person is enabled to take the ear, and affect the heart of men that hear him; but by the grace of the Spirit acting a soul in prayer, he is enabled to move his own heart, and the heart of God also; and this is the man that indeed prays in the Spirit; the other hath the gift, but this hath the spirit of prayer.

Now there is a two-fold grace necessary to pray thus in the Spirit.

1. Grace from the Spirit to sanctify the person that prays.

2. Grace to act and assist this person sanctified in prayer. By the first, the Spirit dwells in the soul; by the second, he actuates the soul.

First, There is necessary to this praying in the Spirit, grace to sanctify the person.

Before the creature is renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, it can neither apprehend nor desire things aright; *The carnal mind perceives not the things of God, nay, it is enmity to God:* And how is such a one fit to pray in an acceptable manner? First, then, the Spirit renews the creature, by infusing those supernatural qualities, or habits of his saving sanctifying graces, which make him a new creature; by these he comes to dwell and live in him, and then he acts his own graces thus infused. The soul is in the body before it acts and moves it; we read of *living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit*, Gal. v. 35. *If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit;* walking supposeth life. To pray, hear, or perform any other action in a holy manner, is to walk in the Spirit; but we must live in the Spirit, or the Spirit live in us (which is all one), before we can thus walk in the Spirit.

There are some acts indeed the Spirit of God puts forth upon souls, that are not thus sanctified, acts of common illumination, restraining grace, and assisting also; thus many hypocrites are enabled to pray in excellent expressions, but he never did assist hypocrite, or any unsanctified person, to perform the inward part of prayer, to mourn sincerely for sin, to pant after Christ and his grace, or to cry *Abba Father* believingly; these are vital acts of the new creature, and flow from a spirit of grace infused into the soul, from which follows this *spirit of supplication*, Zech. xii. 10.

Secondly, As habitual grace is required to sanctify the person, so actual grace to assist him as often as he prays.

The Spirit of God may dwell in a soul by his habitual grace, yet deny actual assistance to this or that particular duty; and then the poor Christian is becalmed as a ship at sea, when no wind

is

is stirring. For as grace cannot evidence itself, so neither can it act itself. Hence it is, that sometimes the saint's prayers speed no better, because he is not acted by the Spirit in it. Sampson, when his lock was cut, was weak like another man. A saint, when the Spirit of God denies his help, prays no better than a carnal man. The Spirit of God is a free agent. *Uphold me*, saith David, *with thy free Spirit*, Psal. li. He is not as a prisoner tied to the oar, that will needs work when we will have him; but as a prince, when he pleaseth he comes forth and shews himself to the soul, and when he pleaseth he retires and will not be seen. What freer than the wind? not the greatest king on earth can command it to rise for his pleasure; to this the Spirit of God is compared, John iv. He is not only to breathe where he lists, in this soul, and not in that, but when he pleaseth also.

CHAP. X.

Sheweth, what Assistance the Holy Ghost gives a Saint in Prayer, more than any other Person.

Quest. BUT the question will here be, What assistance doth the Spirit of God give a saint in prayer more than another person?

Answ. First, In general: The assistance which the Spirit of God gives a saint in prayer above another, lies deep, it is laid out upon the inward man, and inward part of the duty. So that a person may come to know whether himself prays in the Spirit, but he cannot judge so easily of another. Now this special assistance consists in these three particulars.

First, The Spirit puts forth an act of exuscitation upon the soul, to stir up his affections.

Never was any formal prayer of the Holy Spirit's making; when the spirit comes, it is a time of life; the Christian's affections spring in his bosom at his voice, as the babe in Elizabeth at the salutation of the Virgin Mary, or as a string under the musician's hands stirs and speaks harmoniously, so doth also the saint's affections at the touch of the Spirit. He excites the saint's fear, filling it with such a sense of God's greatness, his own nothingness and baseness, as makes him with awful thoughts reverence the divine Majesty he speaks unto, and deliver every petition with a holy trembling upon his spirit.

Such a fear was upon Abraham's spirit, when in his prayer for Sodom he expressed how great an adventure he made, being but

dust

dust and ashes, to take upon him to speak unto the Lord. He excites the Christian's mourning affections, by his divine breath he raiseth the clouds of the saint's past sins, and when he hath overspread his soul in meditation with the sad remembrance of them, then in prayer he melts the cloud, and dissolves his heart into soft showers of evangelical mourning, that the Christian sighs and groans, weeps and mourns like a child that is beaten, though he sees the rod laid out of his heavenly Father's hand, and fears no wrath from him for them.

The apostle tells us, the groans and sighs which the Spirit helps the saints to, are such as *cannot be uttered,* Rom. viii. 26. no, not by the saint himself, who, being unable to translate the inward grief he conceives into words, is fain sometimes to send it with his inarticulate voice to heaven, yet a voice that is well understood there, and more musical in God's ear than the most ravishing music can be to ours. In a word, he stirs up affections suitable to every part of prayer, enabling the gracious soul to confess sin with an aching heart, as if he felt so many swords raking in it; to supplicate mercy and grace, as with inward feeling of his wants, so with vehement desires to have them satisfied; and to praise God with a heart enlarged and carried on high on the wings of love and joy. Parts may help it in the composure of the words (as a statuary may carve a goodly image, with all the outward lineaments, and beautiful proportions in every part), but still it is but the counterfeit and image of a true prayer, for want of that *aliquid intus* which should give life and energy to it. This the Spirit of God alone can effect.

Secondly, As the Spirit of God doth excite the Christian's affections in prayer, so he regulates and directs them.

Who indeed but the Spirit of God can guide and rein these fiery steeds? He is said, in this respect, to *help our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought,* Rom. viii. 26. We, alas! are prone to over-bend the bow in some petitions, and want strength to bend it enough in some other; one while we over-shoot the butt, praying absolutely for that which we should ask conditionally; another time we shoot beside the mark, either by praying for what he hath not promised, or too selfishly for that which is promised.

Now the Spirit helps the Christian's infirmity in this respect, for *he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God,* ver. 27. that is, he so holds the reins of their affections, and directs them that they keep their right way and due order, not flying out into unwarrantable heats, and inordinate desires. He, by his secret whispers, instructs them when to let out their affections full speed, and when to take them up again; he teacheth them the law of prayer, that striving lawfully they may not lose the

the prize. Just as the Spirit was in the living creatures to direct their motion, of whom it is said, *They went every one straight forward, whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not as they went,* Ezek. i. xii. So the Spirit, acting his saints in prayer, keeps them that they lash out neither on this hand nor on that, but go straight forward, and draw their requests by this rule.

Thirdly, He fills the Christian with a holy confidence and humble boldness in prayer.

Sin makes the face of God dreadful to the sinner; guilty Adam shuns his presence, and tells the reason, *I heard thy voice, and was afraid.* If the Patriarchs (being conscious how barbarously they had used their brother Joseph) were terrified at his presence, and so abashed that they could not answer him; how much more confounded must the sinner be, to draw near to the great God, when he remembers the horrid sins he hath perpetrated against him?

Now the Spirit easeth the Christian's heart of this fear, assuring him that God's heart meditates no revenge upon him, but freely forgives what wrong he hath done him; yea, which is more, that he takes him for his dear child; and that the Christian may not stand in doubt thereof, he seals it with a kiss of love upon his heart, leaving there the impression of God's fatherly love fairly stamped, whereby the Christian comes to have amiable thoughts of God, is able to call God Father, and expect the kind welcome of a child at his hands. This is the spirit of adoption which the apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. 15. that chaseth away all servile fear and dread of God from the soul, *Ye have not received again the spirit of bondage to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.* And, Gal. iv. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.*

CHAP. XI.

A Reproof to those who make a Mock of having the Spirit, and Praying by the Spirit; also a Trial whether we have the Spirit or no.

SECT. I.—*Use.* FIRST, Take heed of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, as to this work of his in his saints.

Some are so desperately profane, that they dare flout and jeer at those who shew any strictness in their lives, or zeal in the worship

worship of God, especially in this duty of prayer, with this, These are they that have the Spirit, that pray (forsooth) by the Spirit; nay, more (I tremble to speak it), some have called their praying by the Spirit, praying by the devil. That every gracious soul hath the Spirit of God dwelling in him, the scripture fully tells us, Rom. viii. 9. *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* That God hath promised his spirit to help his saints in prayer, is undeniable, and that he accepts no prayer but what is put up by his spirit, is as sure.

Now mayest thou not know, bold wretch, what spirit thou art acted by, who makest a mock of having the spirit, and praying by the spirit: Who but a devil would set thee on work to blaspheme the spirit of God? but why should we wonder, that the actings of the holy spirit in the saints should be thus scorned and blasphemed, seeing we find that the spirit of God, working so mightily in Christ himself, was maliciously interpreted by the wicked Pharisees to be from the devil, Mat. xii. 24. But let such know to their terror, that to make a jeer of the spirit, or to attribute his works to the devil, if it be maliciously done, will be found to come near the blasphemy of the spirit, which is unpardonable; see ver. 32. *Whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him in this world, neither in the world to come.* And this our Saviour speaks, upon their attributing what he did by the Spirit of God to the spirit of the devil.

SECT. II.—2. Try whether you have the spirit of God or no. A prayerless state is a sad state to live in. Now thou canst not pray acceptably except thou prayest in the spirit, and thou canst not pray in the spirit, except thou hast the spirit in thee.

Quest. But how may I know whether I have the spirit of God or no?

Answ. 1. I shall answer negatively, by what thou must not conclude that thou hast the spirit.

2. Affirmatively, by what thou mayest.

First, *Negatively*, not because thou hast now and then some good motions from the holy spirit stirred in thee: the evil spirit is found often stirring evil motions in souls, where he doth not dwell—a foul stir he makes often in the bosom of a saint, yet dwells not there, because he is not there *per modum quietis, he finds no rest in these dry places*, therefore he is brought in, saying, *I will return unto my house*, viz. to those who are yet in a carnal state, where he can rule the roast, and command as a master doth all in his house.

Truly, thus the holy spirit is often moving in the consciences and affections of carnal creatures, counselling, rebuking, and exciting them; so that upon his suggestions, some flashy short pangs of

of affections are raised in them to that which is good, but presently all is quashed and comes to nothing, and the spirit driven away by the churlish entertainment he finds.

2. Not by the common gifts of the spirit, illumination, conviction, restraining grace, and assistance to perform the external part of religious duties, even to the admiration sometimes of others that hear them; these are the gifts of the spirit, but such as do not prove he hath the spirit that hath them; they are like the brightness or radiancy with which we see the clouds gilt early in the morning before the body of the sun is above the horizon, they shew the sun is near, but it is not risen, for all the radiancy that is seen; so these gifts are beamed from the Spirit of God, and shew the kingdom of God is come nigh such a one; but they do not demonstrate that the Spirit of God is come into that soul, and hath taken possession of it for his house and temple; or they are like the tokens which a suitor sends to the person whom he is wooing to be his wife (the more to insinuate upon her), but the match breaking off, all are required again. Many have these gifts sent them by the Spirit of God, with whom the match betwixt Christ and them was never made up; and if they be not called for back in this life, they shall however be accountable for them at the great day.

SECT. III.—Secondly, *Affirmatively*, by what thou mayest conclude that thou hast the Spirit of God, and that in two particulars; though here I might multiply.

1. If thou beest regenerated by the spirit.

The spirit of God dwells only in a new creature. So long as a man continues in his carnal natural state, he is destitute of the spirit. *Sensual, having not the spirit*, Jude ver. 19.; this text refers to such as have no more than a reasonable soul, without a higher principle of life than nature gives to all men. St. Paul useth the word to set out a man in his mere naturals, as opposed to another that hath a principle of supernatural life from the spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *the natural man receives not the things of the spirit.*

But here the question will be, how shall I know that I am regenerate?

To this answer, every regenerate soul hath *divinam indolem*, a divine nature and disposition, like unto the spirit of God that regenerates him, John vi. 6. *That which is born of the spirit is spirit*, viz. is spiritual, the abstract being put for the concrete, to increase the force of the words. He hath a soul raised as far above the natural men, as they are above the nature of beasts.—When Nebuchadnezzar had the understanding of a man given him, he grazed no longer among the beasts of the field, but returned to his princely throne and life.

Thus the regenerate soul returns to that high and heavenly disposition, which man in his primitive holy state once had; now God, and the things of God, take up his thoughts—he hath a new eye to see vanity, where before he placed felicity; a new gust and taste, which makes him spit out those sinful pleasures as poison, that once were his pleasant morsels, and count all earthly enjoyments, that before were his only feast, but dung and dross in comparison of Christ and his grace; he can no more make a meal on them, than a man can do with dogs' meat, Rom. v. 5. *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit;* they do *sapere*, savour the things of the spirit. Find therefore what thy gust is, and thou mayest know what thy life is, whether spiritual or natural.

2. If thou beest led by the spirit.

The spirit is the saints' guide, Rom. viii. 14. *As many as are led by the spirit of God, are the sons of God.* As the soul is in the body to direct and move it, so is the spirit in their soul, *Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel* (saith David), Psal. lxxiii. 23, 24. Even as the child is led by his father's hand, so the saint by the manuduction of the spirit.

Now, to be led by the Spirit of God imports these three things.

1. A sense of our own weakness and ignorance. He that thinks he knows his way, or that he is able to direct his own steps, will not accept of a guide; it is the weak child, or the blind man, that calls to be led: First, Saul was struck blind, and then he gives his hand to be led to Damascus, Acts ix. Enquire, therefore, whether God hath made thee sensible of thy own ignorance and impotency. Man by nature is proud and self-conceited, he leans much to his own understanding, and stands upon his own strength, very loth to be thought out of the way, or unable to go of himself in it; *The wise feareth and departeth from evil, but the fool rageth and is confident,* Prov. xiv. 16.

Tell a soul spiritually wise he is out of the way, he fears himself, hearkens to the counsel, and turns back; but a fool (and such is every carnal man) he falls out with him that counsels or reproves him, and is confident he is right, as if he knew the way to heaven as well as he doth his way from his house to the market. The first thing that the spirit doth is, to dismount the soul from this high opinion he hath of himself, thereby to make him teachable and tractable. *Men and brethren*, say those converts (after God with one prick in their hearts had let out this wind of pride), *what shall we do?* Acts ii. 37.; their spirit now comes down, willing

willing they are to be directed, so meek and humble, that a child may lead them.

2. He that is led by another, is ruled and determined by him that is his guide, which way he should go. Enquire, therefore, whether the spirit doth thus determine thy soul in its actings and motions; if thou beest led by the spirit, thou walkest after the spirit, and goest the way he goes. Now you know which is the spirit's walk, he is a spirit of truth, and leads into all truth; the word of God is the road he keeps; if thou walkest not by this rule, he is not thy guide.

Speak, therefore, what authority and sway bears the word with thee? Dost thou consult with it, and hearken to it? Or is it to thee as Micaiah was to Ahab, art thou afraid to advise with it? Or when thou dost, canst thou cast its counsel at thy heels, and venture to break its hedge to pursue thy ambitious or covetous projects? If a word lying in the way will not stop thee, thou art not led by the spirit of God thou mayest be sure.

Lastly, To be led imports spontaneity and willingness; this is the difference betwixt leading and driving: The carnal heart may be driven by the rebukes and convictions of the spirit, as a beast by switch and spur; but the gracious soul follows the spirit, as a child his father that holds him by the hand, yea, that cries after his father to take him along with him. *Where the spirit is, there is liberty.* The spirit indeed *draws*, but then the soul *runs after him.* Mary chose the better part; it was not imposed on her against her liking. The obedience of the saints is compared to a sacrifice, Rom. xii. 2. *Present your bodies a living sacrifice*, &c. and it is no acceptable sacrifice that is not offered willingly. The spirit of God makes the soul willing in the day of his power. *I will go with this man* (said Rebeccah); she was as willing to have Isaac as he to have her. The gracious soul answers the spirit's call, as the echo the voice; *Seek my face; Thy face will I seek.*

CHAP. XII.

An Exhortation to them that at present want the Spirit of Grace and Prayer, with some Directions how to obtain it.

NOW this use of trial calls for a double word of exhortation: 1. To those that upon examination find they are destitute of the spirit.

2. To those that by the rules of trial find the spirit of God is in them.

SECT. I.—First, To you that are yet without the spirit of God.

O labour to get this heavenly guest to come and dwell in your hearts. Better it were that thou hadst not the spirit of a man, than to want the spirit of God. If the holy spirit be not in thee, assure thyself the evil spirit is; and no way is there for thee to turn this troublesome guest out of doors, but by getting the spirit of God in. Thou mayest know where thy eternal mansion will be, in heaven or hell hereafter, by the spirit that fills and acts thy soul here; if God takes not up thy soul as a mansion for his spirit on earth, it shews that he prepares no mansion for thy soul in heaven, but leaves thee to be entertained by him in the other world that is thy guest in this. Thus thou seest how thy soul hangs over the infernal pit; what course canst thou take to prevent this thy endless misery that is coming upon thee? Wilt thou stand up as Haman, to make request for the life of thy soul? Alas, thou canst not pray though thy life lies on it, thou wantest the spirit of God that should help thee to groans and sighs; thou must live before thou canst breathe.

Prayer, you see, is not a work of nature, but a gift of grace; not a matter of will and parts, got by human skill and art, but taught and inspired by the Holy Ghost. At the bar of man, the orator's tongue may so smooth over a cause as to carry it; rhetoric hath a kind of spell in it that charms the ears of men, Isa. iii. 3. he is called, *The eloquent orator*, or (as in the Hebrew) he that is skilful in a charm: Thus Abigail charmed David with a well-set speech, and returned his sword into his scabbard, that was drawn to cut off her husband and his family. But words, alas, how handsomely soever they chime, make no music in God's ear; they avail no more with him, when his holy spirit is not in them, than Esau's prayers and tears did with old Isaac for the blessing. The same rod which wrought miracles in Moses' hand, would have done no such thing in the hand of another, because not acted with the spirit that Moses had.

The same words put up in prayer by a man's own private spirit, are weak and ineffectual, yea, distasteful and abominable; which delivered by the spirit of God in another, are mighty with God, and exceedingly acceptable to him. Kings have their cooks, and eat not but what is dressed by their hands: the great God, I am sure, will not like that sacrifice which his spirit doth not prepare and offer. Those prayers which are highly esteemed and applauded by men, are sometimes a great abomination to the Lord, who sees the heart to be naught, and wholly void of his spirit and grace. And on the contrary, those prayers which are despised

despised and harshly censured by man, may be highly pleasing to God. Eli was offended with Hannah, and took her for a drunken woman; but God knew her better, that she was not drunk with wine, but filled with the spirit in prayer, and therefore answered graciously her request. It was wisely done of that Grecian, who being sent ambassador to a foreign prince, studied the language of the country, that he might the more effectually persuade the king, by delivering his embassy in his own tongue. O get the spirit of God, that thou mayest pray to God in the language of heaven, and no fear but thou shalt speed. Now if thou wouldst obtain the spirit:

SECT. II.—First, Labour to be deeply sensible of thy deplorable state while without the spirit.

An unsavoury sapless creature thou art (God knows) unable for any duty, incapable of any comfort. We find the spirit is oft in scripture compared to water, rain, and dew: now as the earth is barren, and can bring no fruit without these, so is the heart of man without the spirit of God. O get thy soul affected with this. When the fields are burnt up for want of rain, man and beast make a moan, yea, the very earth itself, cleft with drought, by opening its thirsty mouth, expresseth its extreme need of some kind showers from the heavens to refresh it; and hast thou no sense of thy woeful condition? Which is worse, thinkest thou, to have the earth iron, or thy heart stone? that the fruits and beasts of the field should perish for want of water, or thy soul for want of the spirit? O couldst thou but be brought to lament thy want, there were hope of having it supplied, Isa. lxiv. 3. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed.*

Secondly, When thou art inwardly scorched with the sense of thy spiritless graceless condition, go and earnestly beg this gift of God.

Now thou goest in a good time, and mayest hope to speed. Possibly thou hast heretofore prayed for the spirit, but so slightly and indifferently, that thou hast grieved his spirit while thou hast been praying for him; but now thou seest thy need of him, and thyself undone, except thou mayest get him, and therefore I hope thou wilt not now shut the door upon thy own prayers, by being a cold suitor; which if thou dost not, thou art sure to bring him away with thee. Christ himself assures thee as much, take it from his own mouth, Luke xi. 13. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?* A father may deny his wanton child bread to play with, and throw under his feet, but not his starving child that cries for bread to preserve his life. God can and will deny him that asks the

spirit, to pride himself with his gifts, but not the hungry soul, that, pinched with his want of grace, humbly, yea vehemently, cries, Lord, give me thy spirit, or else I starve, I die. Nay, let me tell thee, thy strong cries, and earnest prayers for the spirit, would be a sweet evidence to thee that thou hast him already within thee.

Thirdly, Plant thyself under the word preached.

This is *Vehiculum Spiritus*, the spirit's chariot in which he rides, called therefore the *ministration of the spirit*. The serpent, that evil spirit, wriggled into Eve's heart by her ear, and the holy spirit ordinarily enters in at the same door; for he is received *by the hearing of faith*, Gal. iii. 2. They that cast off hearing the word to meet with the spirit, do as if a man should turn his back off the sun, that it may shine on his face. The poor do not stay at home for the rich to bring their alms to their house, but go to their door, and there wait for relief. It becomes thee, poor creature, to wait at the posts of wisdom, and not expect that the spirit shall lacky after thee. If the master come to the truant scholar's house, it is to whip him to school.

Fourthly, Take heed of resisting the spirit when he makes his approaches to thee in the world.

Sometimes he knocks, and meeting a repulse, goes from the sinner's door; this is dangerous. He doth indeed oft return after repulses, but sometimes to shew his liberty, he doth not, nay, leaves a padlock, as I may so say, on the door, a judiciary hardness and unbelief, which no minister's key can open. Thus Christ dealt with them that so mannerly excused themselves to his messengers that invited them, Luke xiv. 24. *None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

Doth the spirit move on thy heart in an ordinance? haply it is by some secret rebukes, directing the minister's finger unawares to touch thy sore place. O beware how thou now behavest thyself towards the spirit. Quarrel not with the preacher, as if he had a spite against thee, and came for a spy to find the nakednesss of thy soul. Struggle not with thy convictions, smother not the motions of the holy spirit in thy next pillow at night, but rather cherish and improve them. It is no little mercy, that as the spirit went by in his chariot, he would call at thy door, and give thee so merciful a warning, which, if kindly received, may bring on a treaty of peace betwixt God and thee, that may end in thy conversion here, and salvation hereafter. It heightened the favour which God bestowed on the widow of Sarepta, that there were many other widows in Israel at the same time, but the prophet was sent to her, and not to them; so it enhanceth this mercy vouchsafed to thee, that there should be many other sinners in the congreation, and yet the spirit is not sent to them, but to thee;

thee; that his arrows should fly over their heads, and be shot in at thy window with a secret message from heaven, to rouze thy sleepy conscience, and woo thy affections from sin to Christ.—Verily the kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto thee. Be but friendly to these his motions, and thou shalt have more of his company.

Fifthly, Converse with the saints that have the spirit of God in them.

They that would learn a foreign language, associate with the men of that country whose natural tongue it is. Wouldst thou have the spirit, and so learn to speak to God in heaven's language? Consort with those, who, by reason of their heavenly nature, will be speaking of God and the things of God unto thee. It is true, they cannot derive and propagate this their spiritual nature; but it is as true, that the spirit of God may make the gracious discourses which they breathe forth vital and quickening to thee; while thou art with such, thou walkest in the spirit's company. Joseph and Mary sought Christ among his kindred, supposing it most likely to find him among them. And it is more probable to find the spirit of Christ among his saints, his spiritual kindred, than among strangers.

The spirit of God came upon Saul when among the prophets; at the hearing them prophecy and praise God, his spirit was also moved to do the same. Who knows but thy heart may be warmed at their fire, and from the savour of their graces be drawn thyself to the love of holiness? But above all, take heed of prophane company, this is a great quencher to the spirit's work. When David resolves for God and a holy life, he packs the wicked from him, *Depart from me ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God*, Psal. cxix. 115. The husbandman bushes his young plants about to keep the cattle off. If there be any buddings or puttings forth of the spirit of grace in thee, as thou wouldst not have all cropped and bit off, chuse not men of a prophane spirit for thy associates; they are like the *north wind* that blows away rain. When the spirit of God hath been moving on a soul, the clouds begin to gather in his bosom, and some hopes of a shower of repentance to follow; then comes wicked company and drives all these clouds away, till there be no shew left upon his heart of what before there were great hopes.

CHAP. XIII.

An Exhortation to the Saints not to grieve the Spirit, and how he is grieved in Reference to his Praying Assistance.

SECONDLY, To the saints.

The word I have for you is, to beseech you not to grieve or quench the holy spirit in your bosoms. Thou canst not fadge to live long without prayer if a saint, nor art thou able to pray to purpose without him; when he withdraws, thy hand presently will forget its cunning, such a chilness will invade thy soul, that thou wilt have little list to pray, for it is he that stirs thee up to the duty; and if thou creepest to it, thou wilt not be warm in the work, for it is his divine breath that must make thy green wood burn, thy affections enkindle. Clothes do not warm the body, till the body warm them, and the body cannot warm them, except the soul, which is the principle of life, warm it. If there be no warmth in the heart, there can be no fervency in the prayer; and without the spirit of God (who is to the Christian's soul what his soul is to his body), no kindly heat can be in the soul. O take heed therefore thou dost not grieve him, lest being distasted he refuse to assist thee.

Now three ways the spirit of God may be distasted by a saint, so as to cause him to deny his wonted assistance in prayer.

First, By some sin secretly harboured in the heart.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, thou wilt not hear, Psal. lxvi. 18. Now when God refuseth to hear, we may be sure the spirit refuseth to assist; for God never rejects a prayer that his spirit indites, and his Son presents. Sin is so offensive to the holy spirit, that wherever it is bid welcome, he will shew his distaste. If you would have this pure dove stay with you, be sure you keep his lodging clean. Hast thou defiled thyself with any known sin? Think not to have him help thee in prayer, till he hath helped thee to repent of it; he will carry thee to the laver before he go with thee to the altar. The musician wipes his instrument that hath fallen into the dirt, before he will set it to his mouth. If thou wouldst have the spirit of God breathe in thy soul at prayer, present it not to him besmeared with any sin unrepented of.

Secondly, By frequent resisting or putting off his motions.

As the spirit helps in prayer, so he stirs up to prayer; he is the saint's remembrancer and monitor, *He shall bring all things* (saith Christ of the spirit) *to your remembrance*, John xiv. 26. God called Jacob to Bethel, so the spirit prompts the saint to duty;

duty; such a mercy thou hast received, up, Christian, praise thy God for it, while it is fresh in thy memory, and warm in thy heart; such a temptation lies before thee, go, pray that thou mayest not be led into it. Thy God waits for thy company, and expects thy attendance, now is a fit time for thy withdrawing thyself to hold communion with him, and pay homage to him.

Now when the Christian shall shift off these motions, and not take the hint he gives, but from time to time neglect his counsel, and discontinue his acquaintance with God, notwithstanding these his *mementos*, he is exceedingly distasted, and taking himself to be slighted, he gives over calling upon him, and leaves the soul for a time, till his absence, and the sad consequences of it, bring him to see his folly, and prepare him to entertain his motions more kindly for the future. Thus Christ leaves the spouse in her bed, when she would not rise at his knock, and makes her trot after him many a weary step before he will be seen of her. It is just that God should raise the price of mercy, when we may have it at an easier rate, and will not.

Christ thrice calls up his drowsy disciples to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation, but finds them still asleep when he comes; what saith he then? Truly he bids them *sleep on;* as if he had said, Take your course, and see what will come of it. Indeed they soon saw it to their sorrow, for they all presently fell into that very temptation, which their Master so seasonably alarmed them by prayer to prevent, and this waked them to purpose.

Thirdly, By priding ourselves in and with the assistances he gives.

Pride is a sin that God resists wherever he meets it, for indeed it is a sin that jostles with God himself for the wall. It is time for the spirit to be gone, when his house is let over his head; he takes it as a giving him warning to be gone, when the soul lifts up itself into his seat; if he may not have the honour of the work, he will have no hand in it. Now the proud man makes the spirit an underling to himself; he useth his gifts to set up himself with them. Three ways pride discovers itself in prayer, and all to be resisted, if we mean to have the spirit's company.

First, When the creature ascribes the spirit's work to himself, and sets his own name upon the duty, where he should write the spirit, like Caligula, who set the figure of his own head on the statue of Jupiter; instead of blessing God for assisting, he applauds himself, and hath a high opinion of his own abilities, pleasing himself with what expressions and enlargements of affection he hath in the duty. This is plain felony, a sin which every gracious soul must needs tremble at. Church-robbery is a great wickedness, O what then is spirit-robbery? *I live*, saith Paul, *yet*

yet not I, Gal. ii. 20. *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. Thus shouldst thou, Christian, say, I prayed, yet not I; I laboured and wrestled, yet not I, but the spirit of God that was with me. Applaud not thyself, but humbly admire the condescending grace of God, to help such a poor creature as thou art; thus David did, *Who am I and my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all these things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*, 1 Chron. xxix. 14. That steward deserves to be put out of his office, that brags of his master's money as his own.

Secondly, When we go to duty in confidence of the gifts and grace we have already received, and do not acknowledge our dependence on the spirit, by casting ourselves after all our preparations upon him for present assistance. As we must pray by the spirit, so we must ask for him, that we may pray by him; *How much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him*, Luke xi. 13. And it is not once asking for all will serve the turn; thou mayest have his help in the morning, and want it at night, if thou dost not humbly ask again for his aid. You know how Sampson was served, when he thought to go out as he used to do; alas, poor man, the case was altered, he was weak as water, the spirit was gone, and had carried away his strength with him. God will have thee, O Christian, know, the key to thy heart hangs at his girdle, and not thy own, that thou shouldst be able to open and enlarge it at thy pleasure.—Acknowledge God, and his spirit shall help thee; but lean to thy own understanding, and thou art sure to catch a fall. When pride is in the saddle, shame is in the crupper; if pride be at the beginning of the duty, shame will be at the end of it.

Thirdly, When we rely on our prayers, and not entirely on Christ's mediation for acceptance and audience; this is pride with a witness, and highly derogatory to the honour of Christ. God indeed accepts the saints in prayer, but not for their prayer, but for Christ's sake. Now the spirit, who is Christ's messenger, will not, you may be sure, give his assistance to rob Christ of his glory; when he helps thee to pray, if thou wouldst hearken to his voice, thou mightest hear him calling thee out of thyself, and confidence of thy prayers, to rely wholly on the mediation of Christ. Wrong Christ, and you are sure to grieve his spirit.

VERSE XVIII. *And Watching thereunto.*

CHAP. XIV.

The Duty of Watching Opened, and why it must attend our Prayers.

THESE words present us with the *fifth* branch in the apostle's direction for prayer, which I called *Prayer's guard.*

Prayer to the saints is as the great artillery to an army, of great use to defend them, and of as great force to do execution upon their enemies, therefore needs the stronger guard to be set about it, lest it be taken from them, or turned against them by the enemy.

SECT. I.—Now the guard which the spirit of God here appoints this great ordinance of prayer, is watching, *watching thereunto.*

Watching is either proper or improper; literal or metaphorical. Watching, literally taken, is an affection of the body; that only can properly be said to watch, which is subject to sleep; and so the body is, not the soul. Thus, to watch, in a religious sense, is a voluntary denying of our bodies sleep, that we may spend either the whole or part of the night in pious exercises. Thus the Jews kept the night of the passover holy, Exod. xiii. 42. Our Saviour spent the night in prayer, Mat. xiv.—xxvi. 31. We find Paul treading in his Lord and Master's steps, 2 Cor. vi. 5. *In watchings and fastings.* Many a sweet spiritual junket holy David's soul got in the night, when others lay asleep in their bed: *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches,* Psal. lxiii. 6.

No doubt, for a devout soul, upon some extraordinary occasions (so superstition be avoided, and health regarded) thus to watch unto prayer is not only laudable, but delectable: *Vigiliæ in quantum valetudinem non perturbant, si orando, psallendo, legendo sumantur, in delicias spirituales convertuntur.* Augustinus. Happy soul, that can thus steal in the dark into the arms of his beloved, and watch for devotion, while others watch to do mischief, or fill themselves with impure delights. This is the Christian, whose soul, like Gideon's fleece, shall be filled with the dews and influences of heaven above others.

But

But secondly, Watching is taken metaphorically, for the vigilancy or watchfulness of the soul.

This is principally meant here, and in other scriptures, where we are commanded to watch, Mark xiii. 35. Rev. xvi. 15. 1 Thes. v. 6. 1 Pet. v. 8. *cum multis aliis.* Now we shall the better understand what duty is imposed upon the Christian under this word *(watching)*, if we consider what bodily watching is; two things it imports, *waking* and *working;* when a man wakes in the night to attend some business then to be done, such a one only truly watcheth; a man that sleeps not in the night, but to no purpose, for no business that he hath to dispatch, he may be said to wake, but not to watch; for this relates to some employment he hath in charge to look to. Thus the shepherds are said to *keep watch over their flocks in the night*, Luke ii. 8.; and the disciples *watched with Christ*, while they sat up to wait on him the night before his passion, Mat. xxvi. 40. So that for a Christian to watch in a spiritual sense, is to preserve his soul awake from sin in the night of this world, that he may keep the Lord's charge, and do the duty imposed upon him as a Christian. Now prayer being one principal duty he is to attend, and intend with all his might, therefore watching is very often joined with it—Mat. xxvi. 41. Mark xiii. 33. Luke xxi. 36. Col. iv. 2. 1 Pet. iv. 7.

In handling this duty of watching unto prayer, I shall,

First, Shew, why the Christian is to watch unto prayer.

Secondly, Wherein the duty of watchfulness, in reference to prayer, consists.

Thirdly, I shall set the Christian's watch for him, by giving some little counsel and help towards his constant performing this duty of watchfulness; for it is not a temporary duty, but for his whole lifetime.

1. Why must the Christian watch to prayer?

SECT. II.—First, Because of the importance of the duty of prayer.

No one action doth a Christian meet with in his whole life, of greater weight and moment than this of prayer is, and that in regard of God, or himself.

1. In regard of God. Prayer is an act of religious worship, we have immediately to do with the great God, to whom we approach in prayer. Now religion is as tender as the eye, it is not a thing to be played with or handled, without great care and heedfulness. Prayer is too sacred a duty to be performed between sleeping and waking, with a heavy eye, or a drowsy heart; this God complained of, *There is none that calleth upon my name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of me*, Isa. lxiv. 7.—He counts it no prayer where the heart is not stirred up and awake.

awake. No way can we more honour or dishonour God, than in prayer; O how then ought we to watch to this duty?

Again, In regard of ourselves; for our behaviour in prayer hath an universal influence into all the passages of our whole life; as a man is in this duty, so he is likely to be in all the rest; if careless in praying, then slighty in hearing, loose in his walking, he shall find that he miscarries in all his enterprizes, is ensnared in all his enjoyments, baffled with every temptation, and discomposed at every affliction that meets him: And the reason of all this is, because our strength both to do and suffer comes from God.

Now God communicates his assistance to his children in a way of communion with them; they ask, and they have; they seek, and find; knock, and the treasury of mercy is opened to them. Prayer is the channel, in which the stream of divine grace, blessing, and comfort, runs from God, the fountain, into the cistern of their hearts; dam up the channel, and the stream is stopped; if the stomach doth not its office, all the members want their nourishment; if the trade fails in the shop, there is but a poor house kept within.

2. Watchfulness is of as great importance to prayer, as prayer is to all our other duties.

No duty can be dispatched well without prayer, nor prayer without watching; for it is not prayer, but prayer performed in a holy spiritual manner, that is effectual; now this cannot be done when the Christian is off his watch. Take the Christian a-napping, with his graces in a slumber, and he is no fitter to pray, than a man is to work that is asleep; whatever a man is doing, sleep when it comes puts an end to it; sleep is the great leveller of the world, it makes all men alike, the strong man is as unable to defend himself from an enemy in his sleep, as the child; the rich man asleep and the poor are alike, he enjoys his estate no more than if he had none.

Thus the Christian, while his graces are asleep, is even like another that hath no grace (as to the present use of them, I mean); he will pray as the carnal man doth, enjoy God no more in the duty than such a one would do. O how sad is this! and yet how prone are we to give way unto this drowsiness of spirit in prayer? it creeps insensibly upon the soul, as sleep doth upon the body; the heart is gone before the Christian is well aware. The more need therefore there is to watch against it.

3. Because satan is so watchful against prayer, therefore it behoves the Christian to watch unto prayer.

Where should the strongest guard be set, but where the enemy maketh his fiercest assault? This is the fort he batters, and labours with all his might to beat the Christian from, well knowing the

the shot which gall him most come out of it. What he doth otherwise against the Christian, is on a design to hinder his prayers, 1 Pet. iii. 7. as an enemy falls upon one part of the city, to draw their forces from another place which he chiefly desires to gain. Indeed the soul never falls fully into his hands, till it throws up this duty, *Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*— Sometimes the city is taken, and the enemy is forced back again by those in the castle, which commands the city.

Prayer is like such a castle, sometimes the Christian hath nothing left him but a spirit of prayer, and with his heart he beats back the devil out of all his advantages, and wrings out of his hands his new gotten victories.

CHAP. XV.

Shews, wherein the Christian's Duty of Watching to Prayer lies.

THE second thing I promised was to shew, wherein the Christian is to express his watchfulness in reference to this duty of prayer. Take it in these three particulars.

1. He is to watch before prayer.
2. He is to watch in prayer.
3. He is to watch after prayer.

SECT. I.—1. He is to shew his watchfulness before prayer, and that,

First, By watching for the fit season to pray in.

We cannot be always on our knees, we may serve God all the day, but worship him we cannot; this is a duty that requires some set times for its exercises. Now it is our duty to watch for the season of prayer, as the merchant watcheth for the exchange hour, he orders his other occasions so, that by no means he may miss that. Thus the Christian should endeavour to dispose his occasions so, that his devotions be not shut out, or crowded up into straights of time by his improvidence; no, nor interfere with other necessary duties. Many a fair child is lost by an untimely birth, and good duty spoiled by being unseasonably performed.

Secondly, He is to keep a strict watch over himself in his whole course.

1. By shunning all that may defile his conscience, and so render him unmeet for communion with God. Thus the priest was to watch himself, that he touched no unclean thing, God thereby signifying.

signifying, that he will have them to be holy in their lives that approach near to him in the duties of his worship.

Secondly, By a holy care to observe and lay up the most remarkable passages of God's providence to him, as also the behaviour of his own heart to God, all along the interval between prayer and prayer; the want of this part of watchfulness is the cause why we are so jejune and barren in the performance of this duty. It is no wonder that he should want matter for his prayer at night, and trifle in it with impertinences, who did not treasure in the day what passed between God and him. Though the minister be not making his sermon all the week, yet by observing in his other studies what may be useful for him in that work, he is furnished with many hints that help him when he goes about it; such an advantage the Christian will find for prayer, by laying up the remarkable instances of God's providence to him, and of his carriage to God again under them; these will furnish him with necessary materials for the performance. The bag is filling while the kine are feeding, or chewing the cud, and accordingly yields more plenty when milked at night.

Truly thus it is here, that Christian must needs be most fruitful and plentiful in his devotions, when he comes to pour out his heart to God in prayer, that hath been thus filling it all the day with meditations suitable and helpful to the duty; would he praise God? he hath the preservations, deliverances, and assurances which God hath given in to him at hand, in the common place-book of his memory, which another hath lost for want of writing them down in this book of remembrance. Would he humbly confess the sins of the day? he presently recalls, In this company I forgot myself, and spake unadvisedly with my lips: In that enjoyment I observed my heart to be inordinate; this duty I omitted, that I was remiss and negligent in doing. Now what a wonderful help hath such a soul above another that walks at random, to get his soul into a melting mourning frame? the eye affects the heart, the presence of the object actuates the affection: the sight of an enemy stirs up anger, the sight of a friend excites love, and puts a man into a sudden ravishment, whom may be he should not have thought on if he had not seen him. How can they mourn for the sins of the day at night, who remember them no more than Nebuchadnezzar his dream?

3. By the frequent exercise of ejaculatory prayer; he doth not watch to pray, that never thinks on God but when he is on his knees; for by his long discontinuing his acquaintance with God, he indisposeth himself for the more solemn addresses of his soul to God. Long fasting takes away the stomach; the Christian will find, that the oftener he is refreshing his spirit with those little sips and short gusts of heaven, the larger draught he will be

be able to take when he returns to his set meal of morning and evening prayer; for by the means of these, he will be will be secured from worldly affections which exceedingly deaden the heart, and also be seasoned and prepared for further communion with God; these short walks often taken, keep the soul in breath for a longer journey.

SECT. II.—He must watch in prayer.

It is not enough to watch the child that he goes to school, but the master's eye must watch him in school; to be idle at school is as bad as to be truant from it. Thou dost well, Christian, to take care of thyself before prayer, and to see that the duty be not omitted; but wilt thou now leave it at the school door? truly then all thy former care is to little purpose.

1. Thou must watch thy outward man, and rouse that up from sleep and sloth.

If the body be heavy-eyed in prayer, the soul must needs be heavy-healed; the pen drops out of the writer's hand when he falls asleep. *Watch and pray*, saith Christ to his disciples; he knew they could not do that work nodding; and yet how many do we see at the very time of prayer in our congregations so far from watching (in this sense) that they invite sleep to come upon them by laying themselves in a lazy posture! Certainly, friends, communion with God is worth keeping our eyes open; little do these drones think what contempt they cast upon God and his ordinance. I wonder any can sleep at the worship of God, and not dream of hell-fire in their sleep. But it is not enough to keep the eye awakened, if thou sufferest it to wander; *Keep back my eye*, saith David, *from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way*, Psal. cxix. 37.

2. Thou must watch thy soul in prayer.

The soul is the man, and the soul in prayer is the very soul of prayer. Watch what its ends and aims are, that it shoots not beside the mark; watch what strength and force thy soul puts to the work; our prayers miscarry by shooting short as well as wide.

In a word, Thou must keep thy heart with all diligence from one end of the duty to the other, or else it will give thee the slip before thou art aware. How oft, alas, do our souls begin to speak to God in a prayer, and on a sudden fall a chatting with the world? one while our hearts are warm at the work, and we pursue hard after God with full cry of our affections, but instantly we are at a loss, and haunt cold again. Holy David was sensible of this, and therefore we have him in the midst of this duty begging help from God to call in his gadding heart, Psal. lxxxvi. 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name.*

SECT. III.—The Christian is to watch after prayer.

1. By

1. By calling his soul to a review concerning the duty, how it was performed by him.

God himself, when he had finished his works of creation, looks back upon them, Gen. i. 31. *And God saw every thing that he had made;* that is, he viewed his work, as an artist would do a piece he hath drawn. He hath given us all a faculty to reflect upon our actions, and looks we should use it, yea, complains upon those that do not *consider their ways and doings.* Many duties depend upon this. He that looks not back how he prayed, can he be humbled for the sins that cleaved to it? and will God pardon what he takes no care to know, that he may shew his repentance for them? or will he mend those faults in the next prayer, which he found not out in the former? no, but rather increase them. We need not water weeds, let them but stand unplucked up, and they will grow alone. This is the sluggard, whose soul will soon run into a wilderness, and be over-grown with those sins in prayer, which at last may choak the very spirit of supplication in him.

Secondly, By observing what is the issue and success of his prayer; as he is to look back and see how he prayed, so forward to observe what return he finds of his prayer. To pray and not watch what becomes of our prayer, is a great folly and no little sin; like children that throw stones into a river, which they never look to see more. What is this but to take the name of God in vain, and play with an ordinance that is holy and sacred? Yet thus, alas, do many knock at God's door (as idle children do at ours) and then run away to the world (as they to their play) and think no more of their prayers? or like Pilate, who asked Christ, *What is truth?* and when he had said this, went out to the Jews, forgetting what he asked.

Holy David did not think prayer such an idle errand, Psal. v. iii. *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord: I will direct my prayer unto thee, and look up.*

First, He is careful to take his aim right in delivering this arrow of prayer, which he sends with a message to heaven, *I will direct my prayer to thee;* then he is as careful to observe where his arrow lights, and what answer is made to it; *and I will look up,* which amounts to as much as that expression, Psal. lxxxv. 8. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak,* that is, to me, concerning the prayer which in these words immediately foregoing he had made, *Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.* When the merchant hath sent his ship to sea, he is enquiring at the exchange after her, to hear how she got to her port, whether on her return, and with what lading. When the husbandman hath cast his seed into the ground, then he comes every day almost to see how it comes up.

This, Christian, is to watch unto prayer, to wait for answers to prayer. Mordecai no doubt had put up many prayers for Esthur, and therefore he waits at the king's gate, looking what answer God would in his providence give thereunto.

CHAP. XVI.

Wherein the Christian's Watch is set for him about Prayer, or Counsel given him how he may set it.

THE third thing I promised, was to help the Christian in setting of his watch, or to give some directions how he may keep his heart in a watchful frame, which take as they follow in these particulars.

SECT. I.—1. Harbour not any known sin in thy bosom.

Sin hath two contrary effects on the conscience, and both sad enough; either it fills the conscience with horror, or benumbs and stupifies it; it breaks the soul's rest, or takes away its senses; the latter is the more common. Suffer the devil to anoint thy temples with his opium, and thou art in danger to fall into the sleeping disease of a stupid conscience; little list then thou wilt have to pray. Or if it hath the other effect upon thee, thou wilt be as much afraid, as now thou dost little desire to pray.

2. Beware of any excess in thy affections to the creature.

A drunken man of all others is most unfitting to watch; such a one will be asleep as soon as he is set in the chair; now all inordinacy of affection is a spiritual drunkenness. Christ joins both together, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*, Luke xxi. 34. It is a preservative against drunkenness of spirit, that the day of the Lord might not take them napping; and of the two, the drunkenness of the affection is the worse: He that is bodily drunk over-night is sober by the morning; but he that is over-charged with the cares or love of the world, rises as drunk as he lay down, and how can he then watch unto prayer? We have therefore these two often joined together, 1 Thes. v. 6. *Let us watch and be sober.* 1 Pet. iv. 7. *Be ye therefore sober and watch.* Whatever the affection is, the intemperance of it lays the soul under a distemper, and indisposeth it to prayer.—Is it sorrow? our Saviour finds his disciples *sleeping for sorrow*, when they should have watched and prayed, Luke xxii. 45. Is it love? this laid Sampson asleep in Delilah's lap.

The

The heart of man hath not room enough for God and the world too; worldly affections do not befriend spiritual; the heart which spends itself in mourning for worldly crosses, will find the stream runs low when he should weep for his sins; if the cares of this life fill his head and heart, he will have little list to wait on God for spiritual purposes. It is no wonder that the master finds his servant asleep in the day when he should be at work for him, if he sat up revelling all the night.

SECT. II.—3. Resist this spiritual drowsiness when it first creeps upon thee.

Sleep is easier kept off when approaching, than shaken off when it hath got possession and bound the senses. This sleepy disease of the soul steals insensibly upon us, even as the night steps in by little and little; when therefore thou findest it coming, rouse up thyself; as a man, who hath business to do, would start up from his chair to shake off his drowsiness. Now thou mayest observe these symptoms of it.

1. An unwillingness and backwardness to duty; if thou findest this, it appears thou beginnest to be heavy-eyed; when grace is wakeful, the Christian needs not many words to persuade him into God's presence: *Thou saidst, Seek my face: my heart said, Thy face will I seek.* Therefore conclude thou mayest, that some vapours have fumed up from thy corruptions, to dull and deaden thy heart to the work. He that would run to the door (when awake) at the first knock of his dear friend to let him in, may, when between sleeping and waking, let him stand too long; this was the spouse's case, and lost her the company of her beloved. It shewed plainly she was in a sleepy distemper, in that she was so backward to duty, for that was the door Christ would have met her at.

2. Formality in prayer is a certain symptom that a sleepy distemper hangs about thee; grace awake is full of life and activity, at least it discovers itself by making the soul deeply sensible of its deadness and dulness. *Vigilantis est somnium narrare*, saith Seneca; it shews the man awake that tells his dream what he did in his sleep; and it proves the soul awake that can feelingly and mournfully confess his deadness.

3. Prevalency of wandering thoughts. In sleep, fancy and imagination rule and range without any controul. If thy thoughts range and scatter into impertinencies in the time of prayer, and meet with no check from thee, it shews thy grace, if thou hast any, is not well awake.

SECT. III.—4. Express a conscientious diligence at thy particular calling in the intervals of prayer.

They that sit up to watch had need of some work to keep them awake; idleness is but one remove from sleep. I cannot

 believe

believe that he who lazeth a day away in idleness, should find his heart awake to pray at night, for he hath that day lived in the neglect of a duty as necessary as this; and it is bad going to one duty through the neglect of another.

There is a generation of men indeed, that under a pretext of watching and praying always, betake themselves to their cloisters, and renounce all secular employments, as if it were as easy to put off the world as to change their clothes, and get into a cowl or a religious habit; but the world hath found these places commonly to have proved, not so much houses to pray in, as dens to draw their prey into; it is more like that those who are pampered with sloth and fulness of bread, should be eaten up with luxury and sensuality, than with zeal and devotion. The air, when still, thickens and corrupts; the spirits in our body are choaked with rest; and the soul needs motion and exercise as much as either; in spiritual offices it cannot hold out without intermittings, therefore God hath provided our particular calling as a relief to our spiritual devotions, only our care must be not to overdo. The same thing may quicken and weaken—wake us, and lay us asleep.

No greater help to our religious offices, than a faithful discharge of our particular calling; no greater duller of the spirit of prayer than the same, when inordinately pursued. The same oil feeds the lamp, and drowns it, if excessively poured on. Hold the candle one way, and the wax nourishes the flame; turn the other end up, it puts it out.

Fifthly, Preserve a sense of thy spiritual wants.

As fulness inclines the body to sleep, so doth a conceit of spiritual fulness the soul; when the belly is full, then the bones would be at rest, the man hath more mind to sleep than work; whereas he that is pinched with hunger, his empty craving stomach keeps him awake.

If once thou beginnest to have a high opinion of thyself, and thy spiritual hunger be a little staid (from a conceit of thy present store, and sufficiency of thy grace) truly then thou wilt compose thyself to sleep, and sing the rich man's lullaby to thy soul, *Take thy ease, O my soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years*: The Corinthians are a sad instance to this purpose, 1 Cor. iv. 8. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us.* Paul is now nobody with you; the time hath been you could not be without his pains, the hungry child did no more cry for the breast than you for the word preached by him; but now your stomach is stayed, you are full, and can live without him: Whereas, God knows, it was a fulness of wind of pride, not of solid grace. It is the nature of grace to dilate the heart, and make room for more, but of pride to cloy and glut

glut the soul. God hath long kept open house in England, the wine-cellar door of his ordinances hath not been shut upon us, we have had free access to drink, and that abundantly, of their sweet wine. But alas! may it not be for a lamentation, to see how many are drunk with spiritual pride, rather than filled with grace, after so long an enjoyment of them? insomuch that some have attempted to stave the very vessels from which they have drawn this wine; such are they that decry all ordinances, and would down with ministers and ministry; yea, who can live without public preaching and private praying also. Others not so mad-drunk as the former, yet are fallen asleep under the tap; they have lost their first life in, and love to ordinances, they sit with sleepy eyes and dead hearts under them. Well, Christian, if thou wouldst keep thy soul awake for this or any other ordinance, take heed thou losest not the sense of thy wants. Begging is the poor man's trade; when thou beginnest to conceit thyself rich, then thou wilt be in danger to give it over, or be remiss in it.

SECT. IV.—6. Retire often to muse on some soul awaking meditations.

We seldom sleep when we are thoughtful, especially if the thoughts we muse on be of weight and importance enough to intend and occupy the mind: Indeed idle trivial thoughts, such as have nothing to invite attention, are given as a ready means to bring a man asleep (I mean bodily sleep). The Christian who neglects frequently to meditate on spiritual things, and lets his thoughts walk all day in the company of carnal worldly occasions, I should wonder if he finds his heart awake at night to pray in a spiritual manner. Give me therefore leave to present a few subjects for my meditations to insist upon, and they will be as the brazen ball, which some philosophers used to hold in their hand that they might not sleep too long; or as the alarum which men set over night to call them up to their business early in the morning.

Meditate of Christ's coming to judgment. Surely thou wilt not easily sleep while this trumpet, that shall call all mankind to judgment, shall sound in thy ear. The reason why men sleep so soundly in security is, because they either do not believe this, or at least do not think of it seriously, so as to expect it. The servant that looks for his master, will be loth to be found in bed when he comes; no, sits up to open the door for him when he knocks. Christ hath told us he will come, but not when, that we might never put off our clothes, or put out the candle; *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour the Lord doth come*, Mat xxiv. 42. There are indeed negative signs concerning his coming to the general judgment of the world, by which we may know

will not yet come; as the fall of Babylon, the calling of the Jews, and other prophecies, that must be fulfilled; before which he will not come: But none such, from which we may conclude that his coming to any of us in particular to take us away by death, and summon us to our particular judgment before his bar, shall not yet be.

Thou art young, thou canst not therefore say, thou shalt not die as yet; alas, measure the coffins in the church-yard, and thou wilt find some of thy length; young and old are within the reach of death's scythe; old men indeed they go to death, their age calls for it; the young men cannot hinder death's coming unto them. Thou art rich, will this excuse thee? Rich men indeed they can get others to serve in their arms here, when their prince calls them forth to war; but *there is no discharge in this war*. Solomon tells us, thou must personally do this; tho' thou art strong and lusty, thou canst not say that death will be longer at work to fell thee down. Some indeed he cuts down by chips in consumptive diseases, they die by piece-meal; others he tears up in one night, as a tree by a tempest: O think of this, and thy sleep will depart from thee.

Secondly, consider, the devil is always awake.

Is it time for them in the city to sleep, when the enemy without watch, and may be are climbing the walls? Our Saviour takes it for granted, *If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would have come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up*, Mat. xxiv. 44. Of all the nights in the year, he would not then have slept. Would Saul have slept in his trench, if he had thought David had been so near? Or Sisera have lain down to rest, if he had seen the hammer and nail in Jael's hand to drive through his temples? *Hannibal is at the gates*, was enough to wake the whole city of Rome, and call them to their arms; and is not, *Diabolus ad ostium*, the devil is at thy door, enough to keep thee out of thy bed of sloth and negligence? What day in all the year is no term to satan? What place or company art thou in, that he cannot make a snare to thy soul? What member of thy body, or faculty of thy soul, which is not in danger to be abused by him? Hast thou not an inmate in thy own bosom that watcheth to open the gate to him? And is there not constant correspondence between them? O how often doth he beat us (as Bernard saith) with our own staff; and (as the thief sometimes serves the traveller) binds us with our own garters? Shall we not always watch to pray, when he watcheth to tempt? Shall we not keep our correspondence with God and Christ, our allies in heaven, as he doth with our flesh that is his confederate?

Ut

Ut jugulent homines surgunt de nocte latrones;
Ut teipsum serves non expergisceris?

Shall thy enemy be awake to seek to cut thy throat, and wilt not thou rise to save it?

Consider, Wicked men they are awake, and hard at work for satan and their lusts. The philosopher blushed that the smith should be up, and have his hammer in his hand, before he had his book. O may it not put the Christian to shame!

Thirdly, Consider how watchful the men of the world are to follow their worldly business.

Do they not rise early, and go to bed late, grudging the very time that is spent to refresh nature in the night with sleep, so bent they are upon their carnal projects! the philosopher observed this, and shamed himself for suffering the smith to be at his anvil in the morning, sooner than he was at his book.

O Christian, should it not make thee blush much more, to see the whole town up, and as busy as bees about a garden, one flying this way, another that way; and all to bring in a little more of this world's perishing pelf into their hive, out of which death ere long will smoke them, and force them to leave what with so much pains they have gathered for others, they know not who, possibly their greatest enemies; while thou Christian sleepest away thy precious time, though thou art sure to carry thy gettings into the other world with thee, and there enjoy the fruits of thy short labour here with everlasting glory.

Nay, consider how watchful the wicked are to take all opportunities to pursue their works of darkness. The adulterer watcheth for the twilight to meet his minion, and wilt thou not watch unto prayer, that thou mayest fill thy soul with spiritual loves in communion with thy God? The thief is up at midnight to get his prey; and wilt not thou break thy rest a little for to obtain a richer treasure than is to be found in the coffers of the richest princes that the world boasts of! Shall these be at so much pains to satisfy their lusts, and thou take none to honour and enjoy thy God? O what a shame was it to the heavy-eyed disciples, that they could not watch to pray with their master, when Judas, that bold traitor, was so wakeful, to be up in the dead of the night to betray him into his murderers' hands?

Fourthly, Consider how short the time is that thou art desired to watch.

Could ye not watch with me one hour, saith Christ, Mat. xxvi. 10. Ere long, Christian, thou shalt be called off thy guard, and then thou shalt have all rest, though no sleep; it is but for this short life thou art put to stand upon this hard duty; and is that so long? Others do not count it so. O how soon is a day, a year, yea, a life, past at play or sin? The great complaint that such

make is, time is short, they wish they could clip its wings, and take off the weights from this clock, that make it post away so fast. Is time so short and sweet to spend in sin? And can it be tedious to thee to bestow it in devotion? Why should an hour in the closet be thought by a saint long, when day and night spent in an alehouse is too short for the sinner? But above all, consider, whether it be not better to watch and pray here on earth for a few days, than to wake and roar in hell under endless and ceaseless torments.

Fifthly, Consider seriously how great a loser thou hast been already in thy heavenly trade, for want of watching.

It is with the Christian as with some negligent merchant, who takes notice of some one loss of a round sum, that befals him (may be some hundreds at a clap), at this he cries, he shall be undone; but regards not the pence and shillings that he idly spends, nor considers his loss which follows upon his daily negligence; here his estate melts insensibly, and he is not aware of it; whereas would he count what in this dribbling way is lost by retail, he might find it amount to more than the other.

Thus the Christian sometimes is troubled for one great sin into which he hath fallen (and that not without reason), but withal, he observes not how he neglects this duty to-day, and negligently performs that at another time; how he now prays coldly for want of due preparation; and what little fruit comes of another for want of watchfulness after it, whereby in time he falls low, tho' with an easy descent, step by step; whereas if he could bring the several items of these his particular losses together, he would find them swell into a sad reckoning, except with these his losses, he hath also lost (which is the greatest) the tenderness of his conscience. Now, Christian, hast thou not a mind to thrive at last? And shall a careless Christian add to his stock? Did you ever go by the sluggard's field, and not find it overgrown with thorns? Wouldst thou but be persuaded to make it thy business daily to watch thy heart, how thou prayest, and how thou walkest after thou hast been at prayer, thou shouldst find a blessed change in thy spiritual affairs; this strictness will at first be uneasy, like a new suit; but every day that will wear off, and a sweet facility follow, when thou shalt see thy gains come trolling in by it; he that finds how well he is paid for his diligence, by the increase of his estate, will not grudge the sluggard his ease, when he shall see him walk by his door in rags. It was a saying once of a rich man, who by God's blessing on his diligence had raised a vast estate, that at his first setting out in the world, he got a little with much trouble; but afterwards he got his gains with little trouble. And thou, Christian, wilt find the same in thy spiritual trade; thy trouble will be most at first, but thy gains most at last;

last; and the trouble less, because the way of godliness by use and experience will be naturalized to thee, and consequently become easy and delightful.

Sixthly, Consider what others lose by thy not watching.

He that lives in a town, wrongs his neighbour as well as himself, by not looking to his fence. Thus one Christian may injure many, by not keeping his own watch.

1. Thy very example is a wrong to others, for this sleepy disease is catching; thy loose conversation may make others so, as one learns to yawn of another. It is no small blessing to live among active Christians, whose zeal and forwardness in the ways of God are exemplary; this puts mettle into those that follow them; the heavenly, holy conversation of a master is a help to the whole family.

2. Thou indisposest thyself for doing justice to them; we are commanded to watch over one another in love, as those that are concerned in our brethren's welfare. Now how unfit is he to watch over others, that doth not watch himself? To provoke others to love and to good works, who needs himself the spur? Can one asleep wake another that is so?

Seventhly, and lastly, Consider Christ's watchful care over thee.

Look upon him in his providence; that eye which neither sleeps by night, nor slumbers by day, is thy constant keeper: Consider him in his intercession, there he prays for thee, watching thereunto with all perseverance; it is his trade and business in heaven; *For he lives to make intercession for his saints*: Consider him in his spirit; what is he but Christ's messenger, sent as our guardian, to take care of the saints in his absence? In a word, consider him in the gospel-ministry, which is set up for this very purpose, to watch for your souls, yea, every private saint hath a charge to be his brother's keeper; this, well considered, would make thee,

First, Watchful to promote his glory, that so carefully provides for thy safety. What put David into such a rage against Nabal, but the disrespect that his servants found at his hands, to whom he had been so serviceable: *In vain have I kept all that this fellow hath.*

Secondly, It would make thee the more watchful over thy own soul; if thou hast so much ingenuity as to fear grieving of thy God, who expresseth his tender care over thee; what greater grief can the indulgent parent have, than to see his child not mind his own good, after all his care and cost laid out upon him? He joys to see the money he gives him improved and increased by his diligence; but it breaks his very heart with sorrow, when it is all wasted and squandered away by ill husbandry.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

With all Perseverance.

THESE words (*with all perseverance*) contain the first branch in the apostle's direction for prayer; which I shall dispatch briefly in these four heads.

1. By giving the importance of this phrase, *All perseverance.*

Secondly, By giving the reason why we are to pray *with all perseverance.*

Thirdly, I shall cast in some considerations to move us to the duty.

Fourthly, Wind up the discourse with a word of counsel and direction for the help of the weak Christian therein.

SECT. I.—1. For the importance of this phrase. Here is perseverance, yea, all perseverance required in prayer.

1. Let us enquire what is meant by perseverance.

2. What by all perseverance.

First, Here is required perseverance. The word *proskarternesis,* here used, comes from *kartos,* the same with *kratos* (a letter only transposed to melt the sound), it signifies strength and victory; hence its compound *proskarterin,* is to prosecute any business with an unwearied constancy, till all difficulties be conquered, and the thing at last be accomplished. It is used for the diligence and labour of hunting dogs, that follow the chace, till at last they get the game pursued; it is applied also to lacqueys, that with great labour run after their masters, and are at their hand in a journey. In scripture it is frequently applied to the duty of prayer; as Acts vi. 4. Col. iv. 2. Rom. xii. 12.; and signifies that invincible patience, courage, and constancy, which a Christian is to shew in upholding this duty of prayer.

Quest. But are *praying always,* in the beginning of this verse, and this *praying with perseverance,* the same? if not, wherein lies the difference?

Answ. It cannot be thought the apostle, being giving directions for prayer, would let them interfere one with another, and in so short a space repeat the same directions over again in other words: The rest are all distinct; so therefore will we take these. Calvin makes this to be the difference: *By praying always,* saith he, he exhorts us to pray in prosperity as well as in adversity; and not then to intermit the practice of this duty, because not driven to it by such outward pressing necessities; but by praying with perseverance, *Admonet, ne defatigemur, instandum esse alacri animo: infracto studio continuandas esse precis, si non statim consequamur quod volumus.* He admonisheth that we be

be not weary of the work; but continue instant and constant in its performance, though we have not presently what we pray for.

By praying always, we are exhorted to the daily constant exercise of the duty of prayer; not to neglect the seasons for prayer, as they return upon us.

By praying with perseverance, we are pressed to bear up against discouragements, as to any particular suit or request we make at the throne of grace, and not to give over, though we have not a speedy answer to it; so that the former is opposed to a neglect of the duty in its stated seasons, and the latter to a fainting in our spirits, as to any particular suit we put up. We may keep our constant course of prayer, and yet not persevere in prayer, for this or that mercy which God withholds some time for the exercise of our grace.

2. I must shew what is meant by *all perseverance*.

1. By all perseverance is meant such a perseverance as holds out to the end, till God doth give the thing we pray for, or takes away the subject of our prayer, as he did in David's case, for his sick child, by his death.

It is possible a soul may continue long, yet at last faint, when it sees the time for answering still protracted; God still stays, and no news of his coming, after many a dispatch sent to heaven upon that occasion. O 'tis hard to *hold up our hands*, with Moses, *to the going down of the sun*. Christ complains how rare and scarce such a faith is to be found, when he bears long before he throws in the mercy prayed for: *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. Shall he find so much faith as to keep his people at prayer in expectation of his coming to their relief?

2. By all perseverance, is meant, a perseverance of the whole man in prayer.

We must not only persevere to hold up the outward performance of the duty of prayer, but persevere to exert the inward powers of our souls, and their graces, in this duty. The duty may be kept up, and the heart down, in performing it. The faith, zeal, and other graces of the soul, may be gone, or act but feebly, like an army that hath not yet quitted the field, but their powder and shot are even all spent; there they stand and set a good face on it, but can do little or nothing to offend the enemy or defend themselves. Thus many in afflictions pray still; they have not yet given over the duty, and run out of the field; but, alas, their faith fails, and their heart quails; there is little life and vigour to be seen in the performance; here is some kind of perseverance, but not this *all perseverance*, which above all requires the perseverance of grace in its actings at the duty: So we translate the word, Rom. xii. 12. what is here with perseverance,

verance, is there *continuing instant in prayer.* Some are instant, but it lasts not; if they find the mercy comes, they draw hard; but if their chariot of prayer be set, and after a pull or two the mercy comes not, their faith jades, and they give over the work; others are constant, but not instant; they continue to pray, but pray themselves cold; they grow lifeless and listless in the work, as if they looked for nothing to come of it; we must join both together, or expect benefit from neither.

SECT. II.—2. I proceed to the second thing promised, viz. to shew we must pray with all perseverance; which takes in these particulars.

First, It is strictly commanded, 1 Thes. v. 17. *Pray without ceasing;* that is, without fainting: so our Saviour, Luke xviii. 1. *He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* Mark, not only that they *might*, but *ought.* It is indeed a high privilege to us, and a low stoop in the great God, to give us leave thus to lie at his door, and to suffer the cry of our prayers to be ever sounding in his ears; we, I am sure, would not like to have beggars knocking day and night at our doors: But so infinitely good is God, that he doth not only allow us that boldness, but also commands it; that the fear of a sin might move us, if the loss of a privilege will not.

2. This perseverance in prayer is highly commended.

Indeed perseverance crowns every grace, and commends every duty; it is not our faith and hope, but *to hold fast our confidence, and the rejoicing of our hope firm to the end*, that God looks at, Heb. iii. 6. Not the seeming zeal and swiftness of our motion in the ways of God, at our first start and setting forth, but the constancy of a well-breathed soul in holding on his course till the race be finished, that Christ commends: *If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed*, John viii. 31.—So in prayer, not the short spurts of an inconstant zeal, that begins to pray (as they say the French do to fight), like thunder and lightning; but if the first charge carries it not, then they quail, and are quite cowed in their spirits. No, it is not this soft metal, whose edge is so easily turned, that God likes in prayer, but a zeal tempered and hardened so with resolution, that makes it cut through all delays and difficulties; this God highly commends: It got Jacob the name of a prince, so nobly he behaved himself in this duty, holding it out till day-break with God, and then would not let him go, till he had blessed him.

3. It is that which God intends by his delays, and seeming denials.

Why

Why deals he thus with his people? surely it is to put their graces to the trial, whether they will quit the siege for a few repulses, or fall on with more courage; he holds his peace, to make them cry the louder; steps aside, to make them more eagerly hunt after him. He lays blocks before the wheel of their prayers, to try their mettle how well they will draw, when it seems a dead pull, and the mercy comes not at their prayer. Now two things God aims at especially by his people's perseverance in prayer.

1. His own glory.
2. Their advantage; these two are never severed.

First, His own glory.

What fairer occasion can the Christian have in his whole life to honour God, than by holding fast his integrity, and keeping his allegiance to God firm, when he seems to be neglected, yea, forsaken of him? Certainly God would never have put Job to so much trouble, nor have made him pray and stay so long for the gracious issues of his providence, but to glorify himself in the faith and patience of his faithful servant. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord*, saith the apostle James, chap. v. Truly we could not have heard so much of his patience, if we had not heard so much of his troubles; had God not put an end sooner to them, he might had more ease, but not God more honour; this was it that God was pleased with, and counted himself highly honoured by, that satan, with all his wits and wiles, could not make Job give over praying, much less fall of cursing God: no, not when God broke him with his tempest, and seemed not to regard him or his prayers. It pleaseth us most, when our prayers make the shortest voyage: when they are at heaven and back again with an answer quickly; but it glorifies God most, when he lays an embargo (as I may so say) upon our prayers, that no answer comes from heaven to us, and yet we will send more after them, as Jacob did Benjamin after his other son, who was then prisoner in Egypt: when the poor soul will not be taken off the duty by any intervening discouragements, but presseth harder upon God for his seeming denials; this is indeed to give glory to God; *Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet thus believes.*

Secondly, God, by his people's persevering long in prayer, before he gives in his gracious answer, intends them no small advantage.

First, He usually pays them use for their forbearance; the longer they pray, the more redundant the mercy is when it comes. Such a mercy, that comes as an answer of persevering prayers, is compared to the husbandman's gains at harvest, which abundantly recompence his whole year's patience: *In due season we shall reap.*

reap if we faint not, Gal. vii. 9. The breast is filling for the child, while the mother is sleeping; God sometimes seems to sleep and forget his poor children that cry to him, but he is preparing the fuller mercy for them.

Secondly, Such mercies as are got with longest and greatest difficulties, they come with sweetest manifestations of divine love. *O woman, great is thy faith!* Mat. xv. 28. This poor woman had not her request so soon granted as some others, but she lost nothing by it; for with the recovery of her child (which was all her errand) she carries away a high testimony from Christ's own mouth to the truth and eminency of her grace; she who was at first called a dog, is at last owned for a dear child.

Thirdly, Such mercies as are the issues of persevering prayers, they are received usually with more joy and thankfulness than others; partly, because the Christian's desires are more intense and sharp, by long staying and earnest praying for them; and so tastes more sweetness in the mercy, as he that comes hungry from a long journey at plough relisheth his food better than another, that hath not whetted his appetite with any labour or exercise.—And also, because such mercies give disappointment to the Christian's many fears which their long stay occasioned; when God is long a-coming, we are prone to question whether he will come at last or no. *Will the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?* Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8. See how many sad thoughts gathered about this good man's heart, which, though they did not overthrow his chariot of prayer, yet clogged his wheels, and made him drive with an heavy heart. Now for a mercy to break out of so dark a cloud, it must needs bring such a glory with it, as to ravish the soul with joy, and enlarge it into thankfulness.

Those judgments amaze and dispirit sinners most, which come after long peace and prosperity, when they think the danger is over, and bitterness of death is even past: as in Haman's case, who was sent to the gallows, after he had vaunted how he was invited to the queen's banquet; this strange turn in his affairs made it a double death to him. So mercies that surprise the saint after he hath prayed long, and can hear no tidings that they are on their way, O how it affects his heart with joy and gratitude! The church had prayed without ceasing for Peter in prison, but still he is there, even to the very time when Herod would have brought him forth, probably to his execution. Now when he came himself to bring them the joyful news that their prayers were heard (while they were instant at the work), it is said, *they were astonished*, Acts xii. 16.

4. They are usually more holily used and improved.

For

For God holds his people long at prayer for a mercy, many times for this very end, to prepare and season their hearts; that when they have it, they may know the better how to employ it for his glory, and their own good. None are more careful to husband a great estate, than those who are at most pains to get it. Hannah prayed long for a son, but none is given; this makes her add a vow to her prayer; *If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and wilt give thine handmaid a man-child, then will I give him unto the Lord all the days of his life*, 1 Sam. i. 11. Happy was it for this good woman she had not her desire sooner; if she had received him at first, haply she had never given him back to God again. The Lord sometimes forbears to give a mercy to us, only to get us deeper into bonds, to lay it out for him when we have it.

5. The last advantage to the Christian by perseverance in prayer is, when the mercy is at last denied, and it is this; it will enable and dispose him to bear the denials more meekly and holily than another.

He that is short spirited, and cannot wait on God for a mercy, will not easily submit to him in a denial; whereas he that keeps up a spirit of prayer for it, when God comes to take away the subject of his prayer, will acquiesce now he sees God hath fully declared his will in the thing. David and Job were pregnant instances of this: Job lets not a day pass without prayer for his children; and how does the man behave himself when they are slain? Doth he fret and fume? Doth he curse God for making them a sacrifice, for whom he had offered so many sacrifices? No, he meekly submits to his holy will, he opens not his mouth against him, but in praises to him: So David, when his child was dead (for whom while living he ceased not passionately to pray), to shew how well satisfied he was with divine providence, he washeth his blubbered cheeks, puts off his mourning apparel, and goes to the house of God to worship, 2 Sam. xii. 20. Prayer is a great heart-easer; it breathes out those distempered passions, which, being bound up in others, break out when God at any time crosseth them in their wills.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Having shewn why we are to persevere in prayer, I come now in the third place to press the duty home.

Christ bestowed a parable on his disciples for this very end, to shew that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; surely then it deserves an exhortation. Now to enforce the exhortation, take these five particulars into your consideration.

First, The prevalency of perseverance in prayer.

This is emphatically expressed by that question of our Saviour in his parable upon this subject, Luke xviii. *Shall not God avenge*

avenge his own elect, that cry night and day unto him, though he bear long with them? As if he had said, Can you think that God will send away those who are so near and dear to him, his own elect, with a denial; and that when he hath made full proof of their faith and patience, in waiting long upon him for an answer? *I tell you* (saith Christ) *that he will avenge them speedily.* Men seek to please their old customers that are constant to their shop, whoever else they send away; so will God those that are in constant trading with him at the throne of grace. *They that wait upon the Lord, shall not be ashamed.* David is careful, for our encouragement, to let us know how well he sped after his long waiting at God's door, Psal. xl. 1. *I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry: Hebrew*, in waiting, I waited; that is, I staid waiting long, and at last he came: but David was a favourite: may others look to speed as well as he did? see verse 3. *Many shall see it, and trust in him.* Answer of prayers is a covenant privilege; it is not a monopoly given to one or two, but a charter granted to the whole corporation of saints to the end of the world, Psalm cii. 17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* Now mark what follows, *This shall be writ for the generation to come*, ver. 18.

Secondly, Thy persevering in prayer will help to evidence thy state to be gracious.

The hypocrite is oft uncased here; *Will he pray always?* Job xxxiv. Many will come into a workman's shop, and take up his tools to work with them for a while, and lay them down again by and by, who would never yield to be bound to his trade, and serve out an apprenticeship at it. Thus an unsound heart will be meddling with this duty now and then, but grows weary of the work at last, especially if he be made to wait long for an answer. Saul prays to God, and because he hears not from him, goes at last to seek to the devil; observe what effect God's silence, frowns, and seeming denials, produce in thy heart, and thou mayest know the temper of thy spirit thereby. Do they wear off thy edge to prayer, or sharpen it? Do they make thee fall off, and send thee away from God's door (as some sturdy beggars go from ours, when denied an alms), with clamours in thy mouth, and discontent in thy heart, resolved to beg no more there? or do they make thee fall on with more courage, and enkindle thy affections to God and this duty more ardently; as the suitor, whose love is heightened by repulses, and importunity doubled by being obstructed and opposed? Truly if thou findest the latter, thou mayest conclude, if this instant constancy in prayer be for spiritual blessings (Christ and his sanctifying graces), that divine

virtue,

virtue, and that good store hath gone from Christ into thy soul. *O woman, great is thy faith!*

Thirdly, Consider the great folly of fainting in prayer.

Thou dost a foolish and irrational act: haply thou art in a deserted condition, prayest for comfort, but none comes; for victory over such a temptation without, or corruption within, but art foiled in both, for all thy praying; therefore thou first faintest in the duty, and then givest it over: what egregious folly is this! Because mercy comes not in all haste to thee, therefore thou wilt run from it, which thou dost in ceasing to pray. When the fisher misseth his draught, he doth not presently give over his trade, but falls a mending his net. O cease not to pray, but mend thy praying; see at what hole the fish went out, the mercy was lost; double thy diligence, and all shall be well at last; if thy pain continues while the plaister is on, dost think it will cease when it is taken off? whatever the mercy is thou wouldst have, must it not come from God's hands? Now, will God give the mercy to thee, who rejecteth his counsel for the obtaining of it?

Is not prayer, and that with all perseverance, the way he directs all his people to take? Suppose a physician who is sent for to a sick patient, should give the messenger an electuary to carry with him, and saith it will be some time before I come myself to the sick man, but charge him to take a good quantity of this, as oft as he finds himself ill, every day till I come, and he shall do well. Now the patient begins to follow the physician's directions; but staying longer than he likes before he comes, and finding his trouble continue, sets it away, and takes no more of it.—The physician at last sets forth, and as he is on his way to him, hears of it, turns back, and comes not to him; so the poor man dies by his own hasty folly.

Truly, this is our case: God, for reasons best known to himself, stays some while before he comes to his tempted distressed servants, for their deliverance; but leaves order when any of them ail any thing (so the word *kakopathei*, Jam. v. 13. signifies) that they should pray, apply themselves to the use of this duty; yea, continue the spiritual constant use of it till he comes, and withal assures us, he will come soon enough to save us. Now what folly is it to cast off this means, so strictly prescribed! Surely though there were nothing else, this is enough to turn God back, when on his way of mercy to do us good.

Fourthly, Consider it is as sinful as foolish to give over this duty. *Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God*, Job. xv. 4. It is a high crime for one trusted with a castle for his Prince, to deliver it cowardly into his enemies hands, especially if he hath provision wherewithal to defend it. Now hath not God provided sufficiently to enable the Christian to main-

tain this duty against all the armies of men and devils, afflictions and temptations, that can oppose it? Princes are most careful to enforce and supply frontier castles above others with all necessaries for defence, because most assaulted. Prayer is a duty that is as hard laid at by satan as any, and hath many other difficulties that render it no easy matter for the Christian to be instant and constant at it. God hath considered this, and accordingly hath provided succour. He gives his Spirit to help the Christian (because of his many infirmities) what, and how to pray; who if he be used kindly, will not be wanting to lift with him in the work; and while the Spirit is ready to pray in him, Christ is as ready in heaven to pray for him; who also sends the precious promises of the gospel, (as messengers into a besieged town) to assure the soul, relief is coming from heaven to him, be the affliction or temptation never so great and formidable that besets it.

Now to faint in the work, and by giving over the duty, to open the city gates of his soul, for satan to enter and triumph over God with his insulting blasphemies, O what gracious soul that hath any spark of loyalty in his breast unquenched to his God, doth not tremble at the thought of such a treasonable action! We cannot cast off prayer, but we cast some dishonourable reflection upon God; for as one saith well, Every real defect in the creature proceeds from an imaginary defect which he falsely supposeth to be in God. Men first conceive unworthily of God, and then carry themselves unworthily and undutifully to him.—Now the causes from which this fainting in prayer proceeds, are all evil and bitter, as by and by will appear.

Fifthly, and lastly, As it is foolish and evil, so it is of dangerous consequence to ourselves, to faint, and cease to pray.

First, It is the ready way to bring some stinging affliction upon us; this is the best that can come of it. Art thou a servant of God, and fliest from his face? expect a storm to bring thee back to thy work. Art thou a child, and playest the truant? look that thy heavenly Father will send thee to school with a rod at thy back.

Secondly, Cease to pray, and thou wilt begin to sin. Prayer is not only a means to prevail for mercy, but also to prevent sin. *Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* The thief comes when the candles are out, and all the house in their beds: Christ could not keep his disciples awake at their devotions; and how soon were they put to the rout when the tempter came? When the courtier in a discontent withdraws, and gives over his attendance at court, he is more easily wound into disloyal practices against his prince. Discontent softens the heart to receive sinful impressions from the tempter. *Thou castest off prayer, and restrainest fear before God,* Job xv. 4. Eliphaz's doctrine was true,

true, though his application was false: when Saul gave over in a pet to pray to God, then he sought to a witch.

Sins of commission are the usual punishments that God inflicts on persons for sins of omission; he that leaves a duty, may fear to be left to commit a crime; he that turns his ear from the truth, takes the ready course to be given over to believe fables, 2 Tim. iv. 4. He that casteth off prayer, it is a wonder if you find him not ere long cast into some foul sin.

SECT. IV.—The fourth and last thing propounded, was a word of counsel for the Christian's help and direction in this difficult work of perseverance in prayer.

Now this will, I suppose, be best performed by laying before you the several causes of a person's falling off from this duty, or fainting in it, and so to fit the directions accordingly; all diseases are not cured with the same medicine; neither are catholic remedies so effectual, as those which respect the particular humour from which the distemper ariseth. Now the causes of non-persevering in prayer, are divers.

First, Sometimes the cause is want of a lasting and enduring motive or principle to keep and hold us constantly to the duty.

When the spring is down, the watch must needs cease going; for that fails that gave the wheels their motions. That sometimes which sets the creature to prayer, is not pure obedience to the command, but a desire to some particular mercy, which if obtained, the fish being caught, the net is laid aside; or if he prays long, and hath it not, he grows weary of the work, and lets it fall. Be sure, Christian, therefore, to pray in obedience; bind the duty upon thy conscience, and thou wilt not easily shake it off. *God forbid* (saith Samuel) *I should sin in ceasing to pray for you*, 1 Sam. xii. He had little encouragement for them he prayed for to continue at the work, but his obedience to God, to whom he prayed, held him to it. This is a strong fence to hedge in the heart indeed; we cannot break through this hedge, but we shall feel the thorns in our side.

A gracious soul dreads nothing more than guilt: tell him it is a sin to cease praying, and you say enough; what though God answers not my prayer, his silence to my prayer must not make me silent, not to pray. Prayer is still a duty; God is not bound to answer presently when we pray, but we are bound to pray, tho' he doth not answer. *All this is come upon us* (saith the church) *yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant*, Psal. xliv. 17. Remember, Christian, thou art a covenant-servant, and one thing thou art, as such, bound to do, is to pray to thy God without ceasing, 1 Thes. v. This will defend thee against any motion that the tempter suggests to the contrary. The beggar knocks a-while at the rich

man's door, and if he be not served, away he goes; but the servant in the house, though he be hungry, doth not run away presently from his master, because he hath not his dinner so soon as he desires.

Secondly, Sometimes this not persevering in prayer comes from pride.

This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for the Lord any longer? 2 Kings vi. 33. What a haughty spirit was here? Pride likes not to wait, but to be waited on. He in the gospel was ashamed to beg, much more to stand long at the door upon a begging errand. Now, though this be a disease which a saint is more free from than other men; yet there are dregs still within him to roil and distemper his spirit, if he be not daily evacuating and purging them out; it will not therefore be amiss to leave a few soul-humbling considerations in your hands, which you may be often taking, especially when you feel any grudgings of this sin about you, and your hearts begin to grow discontented, that God makes you stay so long for any mercy prayed for.

1. Consider what it is to pray.

It is to go a begging for an alms, not to demand a debt. Now doth it become thee in so poor a condition, and about such a work, to be so quick and short with thy God? If you can live without being beholden to God, why then do you at all come to his door? If you cannot, why then do you not wait more patiently for his pleasure? Should he wrong thee if he beat thee from his door? Why then art thou no more thankful for his leave to wait there, though thou beest not presently served?

2. Consider who he is thou prayest to.

Is he not the great and glorious majesty of heaven and earth? And is not this one piece of the state he looks to be served in by his poor creatures? How long did Mordecai sit at the king's gate, before he had what he waited for? Is it not time enough for the servant to be set at dinner, after he hath waited at his master's table? Were it not insufferable sauciness in the servant to complain his master sat too long, and required too much waiting at his hands? This is the language of our hearts, when we think much to stay God's time for a mercy. Is he not a righteous holy God? Surely he doth thee no wrong to make thee pray, and that long, for a mercy which thou deservest not when it comes at last. Is he not wiser than thee, to know how to time his mercies? *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of its place?* Job xviii. 4. Wilt thou have God overthrow the course of his providence, which he thinks fit, to gratify thy impatient spirit? surely this is to charge God foolishly with some error in his government.

In a word, Is not he a faithful God, though he comes not so soon

soon to thy relief as thou wouldst have him? Where did he allow thee to date his promises, and set the day of payment? No, he hath promised to answer his children's prayers, but concealed the time of performance of his promise, on purpose to keep them in a waiting posture; and therefore he breaks not his promise when he detains a mercy, but thou forgettest thy duty not to wait. God is not unfaithful, but thou art faithless and unbelieving.

3. Have not as good as thyself prayed, and that as long as thou, before they have received an answer; and yet have not thus behaved themselves?

Look into the generation of seekers, and thou wilt find that God hath exercised their patience as well as thine. Hast thou stood at God's door longer than many of thy brethren have done? Remember Job, David, Heman, how many troubles came over their heads, what sad tidings did they hear! dismal afflictions did they endure before the day broke, and divine providence cleared up! Shall God raise a causeway for thee to walk by thyself dry shod, while these, and thousands besides, have taken many a wry step through the deep sloughs of affliction, before they could come to a fair way?

When God led Israel far about, and made it a journey of forty years from Egypt to Canaan, it had been great pride for any among them to have desired God to lead him a shorter way thither than all his brethren. David desired no more at God's hands, than to fare as his fellow saints did, Psal. cxix. 132. *Be merciful unto me as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.* Nay, doth not Christ himself, an example beyond all examples, wait, and that long, even in heaven itself, for an answer to his prayers? He hath been already above a thousand years there at prayer for his church, and against his enemies, and hath not as yet received the full of his desires; but still is expecting, till the one be saved, and the other made his footstool. Who art thou, that thou shouldst have so high an opinion of thyself, as to look that God should make all stay, and trade for time, while thou alone for ready money?

4. Consider whether thou didst ever make God wait on thee before his suit could be heard, though he begged not for his benefit, but thy own. Did God wait in thy carnal state upon thee, that he might at last be gracious to thee, and thinkest thou much to wait at prayer now on him?

Thirdly, This not persevering in prayer proceeds often from unbelief.

The creature prays; God is silent, and no answer comes: Now, thinks satan, is my time come to do this person a mischief, and therefore he labours to persuade the creature, that there is

no mercy to be expected from God. If, saith the tempter, God had meant to come, he would have been here before now. So many days and months are now gone, and no news of his approach; thou hast stayed too long, to meet with disappointment at last; give over, and take some other course.

Thus he dealt with our Saviour; no enemy appeared in the field for forty days, and then he appears.

This is his way with the saints also; he lets them alone while he thinks they are softened into a compliance, by long standing upon duty, and hopes their ammunition grows low, then he comes to parly with them, and takes them off from waiting upon God, by starting many fears and doubts in their thoughts concerning the power, mercy, and truth of God; so that the poor Christian is at last put to a stand, and knows not whether he should pray or not pray; or if he holds up the duty, yet not his heart in it; he prays faintly, and with a kind of despair, as the poor widow that made ready her last handful of meal, with no other thoughts than of dying when she had eat it. Thus he prays, but looks upon nothing but death and misery to follow it. O this is sad praying, to expect no good from God in the performance.

Unbelief is a soul-enfeebling sin; it is to prayer, as the moth to the cloth, which bites the very threads asunder, and crumbles it to nothing; it wastes the soul's strength, that it cannot look up to God with any hope, Neh. iv. 9. *They made us afraid, saying, their hands will be weakened.* Resist therefore satan, stedfast in the faith; never let thy heart suffer the power, mercy, or truth of God to be called into question; thou hadst as good question whether he can cease to be God. These attributes of the divine nature, are to thy faith, like the stone to Moses, which Aaron and Hur put under him to sit upon; they will sustain thy spirit that thou shalt not faint, or grow weary at the work, tho' God makes thee wait till the going down of the sun. O this waiting posture highly pleaseth God, and never puts the soul to shame. Mary, that stayed by the sepulchre, though she missed her Lord there, got at last a happy sight of him. *Quæramus et nos Christum* (saith one in the same place) *ex fide, et astabit nobis licet non illico eum agnoverimus.* Let us but seek Christ in faith, and he will at last be with us, though we do not presently see him.

Fourthly, Some persevere not in prayer, because they have their eye upon some other than God; from whom they expect help.

It is no wonder he gives over praying, who thinks he hath another string to his bow. While the carnal heart prays for deliverance, he hath other projects in his head how to wriggle himself

self out of the briars in which he is caught; and on these he lays more stress and weight, than on God to whom he prays; therefore at last he leaves praying, to betake himself to them; whereas another that looks for all from God, and sees no way to help himself, but by calling in God to his aid, will say, as Peter to Christ, asking his disciples whether they would leave him as others had done, *Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* I know no other door to knock at, saith the poor soul, but thine; the creature hath it not to give, but thou hast: I will therefore never leave thee; we know not what to do, said good Jehoshaphat, but our eyes are up unto thee.

Fifthly, It proceeds from a want of inward complacency which the creature should have in God, and communion with him.

Job xxvii. 10. *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?* He will not always call upon him, because he never did cordially delight in him. We easily let go what we take no great content to enjoy; the sincere soul is tied to God by the heart-strings, his communion is founded in love; and love is stronger than death, many waters cannot quench it.—A stranger may have an errand that brings him into a man's house, but that done, his acquaintance ceaseth; but a friend, he comes to sit with him, and the delight he takes in his company will not suffer him to discontinue his acquaintance long.

Get therefore thy affections but once placed upon God as thy chief good, and the spark or stone will as soon forget the way to their centre, as thou the way to thy God in prayer. The hypocrite useth prayer as we use physic, not because he loves the taste of it; the sincere soul, as food, it is sweet to his gust. David, from the inward satisfaction he found in the presence of God, cries out, Psal. lxxiii. 28. *It is good for me to draw near to God;* as one that, tasting some rich wine, or sweet morsel, lays his hand on his stomach, (where he finds the cheering of it,) and saith to the standers by, O it is good; never will such a soul part with it; no, he will say, as the fig-tree in Jotham's parable, shall I forsake my sweetness; and the good fruit that I have found in communion with my God? I will never do it.

VERSE XVIII. *And Supplication for all Saints.*

CHAP. XVIII.

Speaketh of the Public Spirit which should breathe in our Prayers for others; with a Lamentation for the Want of it, and an Exhortation to it.

THESE words contain the sixth and last branch in the apostle's directory for prayer, and that is the comprehensiveness of the duty, or the persons that are to be the subject of our prayers, *Supplications for all saints.*

But what! Would he have us pray for none but the saints? This cannot be the apostle's meaning, it being so contrary to the mind of Christ, from whom he hath his message: Christ both bids us pray for our enemies, and is himself our pattern for it; yea, Paul himself teacheth contrary to this, 1 Tim. ii. 1. *I exhort that prayers and supplication be made for all men;* that is, all sorts of men, faithful and infidels, friends and enemies; so then saints are not here named as the adequate and only subject of our prayers; but as a principal *species,* a sort of persons, whom we are in an especial manner to carry in our prayers to God, whom if we do but remember, we shall not easily forget to pray for others also; because, as Augustine saith, *Numerus sanctorum de numero impiorum semper est auctus:* The saints' number is increased and taken out of the number of the wicked. In praying for Babylon, we pray for Jerusalem; the more that are prayed out of sin, the more are prayed into Christ: We shall wind up our discourse on this subject upon these three bottoms.

1. We must shew a public spirit in prayer, by praying for others as well as ourselves.

2. Of all whom we remember in our prayers, saints must not be forgot.

3. In praying for saints, we must be careful to comprehend and encircle all saints.

SECT. I.—First, of the first, The Christian ought to have a public spirit in prayer.

This is a duty of common interest, in which others are to share with ourselves, like the buckets that hang in our houses, which are for the use of the whole town, when any house is on fire.—The spirit of prayer is a public treasure, though laid up in some few

few hands; all cannot pray, therefore all should be prayed for: I say, it is the saint's duty, not a favour upon courtesy, which may, *ad libitum*, be done, or left undone; we sin and transgress the law of prayer, if we do it not: *God forbid*, saith Samuel, *that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you*, 1 Sam. xii. Paul writes himself a debtor to his brethren in this respect: *We are bound to thank God always for you*, 2 Thes. i. 3. He acknowledges it due debt; in another place, he *thanks God that he hath him in remembrance always:* So sensible he was of the weight of this duty, that he thanks God for giving him a heart to perform it.

1. It is one end why the spirit of prayer is given us.

The gifts of the spirit are to be employed according to the mind and intent of the donor. If a man bequeaths house and land to another, but charges his estate with such a payment for the use of the poor, he forfeits his legacy that fulfils not the will of the dead. God intends the good of others in all his gifts to particular saints; the way to lose our gift is to hoard it up, and not lay it out for the end it was given. *The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit with*, 1 Cor. xii. 7. How should we profit others by this gift of the spirit, if not by praying for them?

That spirit which stirs us up to pray for ourselves, will, if we quench it not, send us on the same errand for others; yea, in some cases, for others before ourselves; for their spiritual good, before our own temporal; for the public good of a community, before the private good of our single person; as in Moses's case, who would not be taken off praying for Israel, to be made great upon their ruins; indeed that offer from God, *Let me alone, and I will make of thee a great nation*, was only probatory to try whether Moses would prefer his own stake before the people's; and God was highly pleased with his self-denial.

2. The law of love binds it as a duty upon us.

We are commanded to *love our neighbour as ourself;* that (as) imports a parity for kind, though none for proportion; for manner, though not for measure; I must love my neighbour as truly, though not as strongly as myself. Now how do we shew real love to ourselves? Our Saviour expounds our love to our enemy by praying for him, Mat. v. 44. *Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you.* We may give an alms to an enemy, and not love him; it is easier to draw out our purse, than to draw out our soul to the hungry, as the prophet phraseth it; in prayer we draw out our souls. If a man ever speaks or does any thing sincerely, surely it is when he directs his speech to God in prayer, saith *Lucas Brujens.* upon the place; therefore God chooseth this of praying for our enemies, as the surest testimony

mony for our loving of them; and truly he that wisheth well only to himself, may be well reckoned among the most degenerate of mankind; one well compares such a self-lover to the hedge-hog, that laps himself within his own soft down, and turns out his bristles to all the world besides.

Use. This shews the largeness of God's bountiful heart.

He gives his children not only leave to ask for themselves, but for others; that is not the manner of men, we count it too much boldness to beg for themselves, and others also. If a poor man, when he hath got his alms, should then beg for all his neighbours, where should he find the man that would bid him welcome? but behold here the immensity of divine goodness, who gives us leave to bring our neighbour's pitcher with our own to his door; yea, commands it, and takes it ill when we steal to prayer upon our own private errand, and leave the thought of others' necessities behind us. Why shouldst thou, Christian, stand in doubt, whether God will supply thy own wants, when he commands thee to intercede for others?

SECT. II.—2. A lamentation may be taken up for the narrowness of our spirits in prayer.

Some indeed are so far from praying for others, that they have not learnt to shew so much mercy to themselves; yea, live in such an estate of alienation from God, wherein they cannot pray for themselves, or their dearest relations. O how many prayerless fathers have we that are cruel to their own flesh? Husbands to the wives of their own bosom? Ask whether they love them, they will tell you, yes, that they do as their own souls; and you may believe them; for they serve them no worse than they do their own souls. A time is coming, wherein they will know, one hearty prayer found upon the file for their relations, would speak more for their love they pretend towards them, than all the bags of money which they fill for them. Others, if they shew a little natural affection to their own flesh, and domestic relations, yet their love hath much ado to get over their own thresholds, to enquire how it fares with others. O how little do they feel their neighbour's pains? How seldom do they spread them with any real sense upon their hearts before the Lord? Or if their eye affects the heart with what is presented so near them in the afflictions of their next-door neighbour, yet how few discover such a public spirit, as to carry upon their hearts the miseries of those that are at further distance, so as to be faithful remembrancers to the Lord for them! Blessed Paul was affected with, yea, had *a great conflict for those that had never seen his face in the flesh;* even among those that are Christians, O what a decay is there of this public spirit!

There is a great complaint in the world among men, of their great

losses in our late times of confusion; but I think the saints are the greatest losers, who would have lost so much of their love and charity; one saith the world was once destroyed with water, *propter ardorem cupidinis*, for the heat of lust which had set it on flame; and shall be once again destroyed with fire, *propter teporem charitatis*, for the coldness of love and charity: Love is to the soul, what natural heat is to the body, it gives vigour, and enables for the performance of all offices of life; but alas, how is this kindly heat decayed among Christians in this old age of the world! This was long ago foretold by our Saviour, Mat. xxiv. *The love of many shall wax cold;* and no wonder, when self-love, that predatory fire, waxes so hot; foretold also by the apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 2. *In the last days men shall be lovers of themselves;* and what a black regiment follows this captain, sin, is there to be seen; if once a man make self the top of his aim, farewell loving of, or praying for others: Charity cannot dwell in so narrow a house as the self-lover's heart is; yea, it is diametrically opposed to it. *Love seeks not her own*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. But to turn lamentation into exhortation, labour for a public spirit in prayer; is there none, O man, that needs the mercy of God besides thyself?

Wouldst thou have none saved in another world, nor provided for in this world with thee?

Now, in remembering others, God will give thee leave thy love should begin at home, though he would not have it end there: look into thy family, canst thou forget them a day, if thou rememberest thyself? Shall a believer turn worse than an infidel? He provides for his house, and thou hast light that tells thee, all thy providing for them is nothing, except God say *Amen:* When thou hast paid thy duty to them, still widen thy charity, and take up thy neighbours into thy thoughts. O consider what is doing in the streets and neighbourhood: how many mayest thou there soon find, pouring out their precious souls as a drink offering to satan, the God of this world, in their horrid abominations? O pray that God would stay their bloody hand, before they have irrecoverably made away with themselves; then take a further walk in thy meditations, to view the public state and posture of the nation; see what mercies are writ with the golden pen of providence upon its forehead, and pay thy humble thanks; what prognosticks of judgments coming thou canst observe in the face of the times, and get into the gap before the wrath begins. Did Abraham so plead for a Sodom, though himself was far enough from the danger of the storm, and not thou for thy own nation, who art like to be taken in it, if it falls in thy days, or thy posterity to rue it, if the cloud impending be not scattered by the prayers of the faithful? Nay, let not the sea that divides thee, and the other parts of

of the earth, make thee think thou art not concerned in their happiness or misery.

Let thy prayers walk over the vast ocean, and bring matter for thy devotions, like the merchant's ship, her freight from afar: Visit the Churches of Christ abroad; yea, the poor *Indians*, and other ruins of mankind, that lie where Adam's sin threw them with us, without any attempt made as yet upon them by the gospel for their recovery, and carry their deplored condition before the Lord. Our *Drake* is famous for compassing the earth with his ship in a few years: Thou mayest by thy prayers every day, and make a more gainful voyage of it too than he did.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Take two or three quickening considerations to set thee the more feelingly to this work.

First, Thou canst not pray in faith for thyself, if only for thyself.

The Lord Jesus taught his disciples this piece of charity, in the form of prayer he gave them; *When ye pray, say, Our Father; Pater est verbum fidei; Noster, est verbum charitatis: Father*, is a word of *faith and confidence: Our Father*, imports *love and charity;* two necessary graces in prayer. We live by faith, and faith works by love; no prayer can be without faith, nor faith without charity. Christ sends him in the gospel from the altar, to reconcile himself to his brother, before he offered his gift, and why? but that he might be as ready and willing to pray for his brother, as himself? If we have not charity to pray for our brother, we cannot expect welcome when we pray for ourselves.

Secondly, You do not else make good the character and good report which God gives of his children.

He speaks of them to be a blessing to the persons and places round about them, Isa. xix. 2. *Israel a blessing in the land of Assyria.* They are compared to a fountain, which is a common benefit to serve a whole town; to stop or trouble which, is a wrong to all that draw their water thence, Prov. xxv. 26. Now one way wherein the godly are eminently serviceable to others, is, by the interest they have in God, and the prevalency of their prayers with him; *By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted*, Prov. xi. 11. That is, by their fervent prayers, which draw down a blessing from heaven upon it; God blesseth *imperatorie*, by command, Psal. cxxxiii. 3. *He commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.* The saints bless when they pray, Numb. vi. 23. *On this wise shall ye bless the people, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee.*

Thirdly, God gives a signal testimony of his favour to his saints' prayers for others.

1. He doth great things at their request for others.

How

How oft did Moses reverse divine plagues that were executed on Egypt, even as oft as Pharaoh had a heart to beg his prayers? How low did Abraham beat the market for Sodom's preservation? He brought it down to ten righteous men; could that wicked place have but afforded that number, it had not been turned to ashes.

2. When their prayers obtain not a mercy for a people, then nothing else can help them.

Therefore God, to express his peremptory resolution, and irreversible decree to punish Israel, tells them, *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be to this people*, Jer. xv. 1. thereby intimating their case desperate; if the prayers of such holy men could not prevent the fall of that cloud of his wrath impending, much less should they with their own power and policy shift it off: indeed when God is fully set upon a vindictive way, he takes them off from praying, Jer. vii. 16. *Pray not thou for this people, for I will not hear thee;* and even in this he shews at what a rate he values his people's prayers, which makes him loth they should bestow their pains in vain. *Pray not thou for this people;* as if he had said, let them pray if they will, I can without any regret reject their motion; but I am unwilling thou shouldst pray, in an unaccepted time, for that which I have no mind to give.

3. When the saints' prayers bring not back with them the mercy for others that is their express errand, yet God is careful that his people should not have the least suspicion that the denial proceeds from any disrespect he hath to their persons or prayers; and therefore he sometimes gives the thing they desire, only he changes the subject.

Thus, what God denied Abraham for Ishmael, he gave him abundantly in Isaac; sometimes, again, what he denies them for others, he grants to themselves; thus David's prayer for his enemies returned into his own bosom.

SECT. IV.—Now in praying for others; First, get thy heart deeply affected with their state and condition for whom thou prayest.

God loves mercy better than sacrifice: to draw out our souls in giving an alms, is greater charity than to draw out our purse; so in prayer, be sure thy soul be poured out, or else thou art a deceiver, thou wrongest both God and him also thou prayest for; before Christ prayed for Lazarus, he was troubled himself; *Behold how he loved him*, said those about him, who were witnesses to the groans he fetched, and tears he shed. Then thou wilt pray fervently for others, when thy heart is warmed into sympathy with them. A lawyer may shew more rhetoric in pleading a man's cause, but a brother or dear friend, that carries the sense

of his condition upon his heart, must needs discover more affection.

Secondly, Prefer spiritual blessings, in thy prayers for others, before temporal.

Is it a sick friend on whose errand thou goest? If health be all thou beggest for him, thou art not faithful to thy friend; he may have that, and be the worse for it: ask a Christ, grace, and glory for him, and then thou dost something to purpose; surely this our Saviour meant in his method of curing the palsied man, Mat. ix. 2. to be cured of his disease, *Be of good cheer* (saith Christ), *thy sins are forgiven thee.* He first brings him the news of a pardon, as a mercy infinitely more worth than life or limbs, thereby tacitly reproving his friends, who took more care to have his body healed, than his soul saved. Is it the nation thou art praying for? Aim at more than deliverance from outward judgments and plagues. The carnal Jews could say, *Give us water that we may drink*, Exod. xvii. 2. but thought not of their sin, to beg repentance for, and pardon of it; that was the cry of the creature; a beast can low and bellow in a drought, but this is the voice of a saint.

Thirdly, Be not discouraged in your prayers for others, though an answer doth not presently overtake them.

Thou prayest for a rebellious child, or carnal friend, who yet continue to be so; take heed thou dost not presently think them past grace, and give over the work. Samuel saw the people he prayed for, mend but slowly, yet hear what he saith, 1 Sam. xii. *God forbid I should cease praying for you.*

I have heard of some that have been laid forth, yea buried, before they were dead, by their over-hasty friends. Be not thou thus cruel to the souls of thy relations or neighbours, lay them not out of thy prayers, bury them not in thy thoughts for reprobates, because thou canst not perceive any sign of spiritual life in them, though thou hast many a time stretched thy hands in prayer over them: their souls, thou seest, are yet in their bodies, and so long it is not too late for God to breathe the life of grace into their souls.

Again, Is it for the public thou prayest? Draw not in thy stock of prayer, though thou hast not so quick a return in thy trade with heaven for it as thou desirest. The father's labour is not lost, if his son receives the benefit of it; he may-be dies before the ship comes home he sent forth, but his child lives to have the gains of that adventure paid into his purse. Thus one generation sows prayers for the church, and another reaps the mercy prayed for.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

Sheweth, in Praying for others, the Saints are principally to be remembered, and why.

The Second Preposition follows.

IN praying for others, we are in an especial manner to remember Saints.

The apostle hints this, by making them the instance for all, as the *species famosa,* or chief rank of men for whom we are to pray; and it suits well with Paul's doctrine elsewhere, Gal. vi. 10. we are there bid, *as we have opportunity, to do good to all, especially to them who are of the household of faith.* Now this of prayer, I take to be one of the most eminent ways of doing them good; what greater kindness can a man do for his sick friend, than to go to the physician for him? By other acts of charity, we give a little out of our own purse; but by praying for the poor saints, we open God's treasury for them.

If one should meet a beggar, and out of his purse throw him a few pence; but another tells him, I have no money of my own to give, yet I will go to court, and open your necessitous condition to the king my master: it were easy to tell which of these does the poor man the greatest kindness. A poor saint may thus do more for another, though (as Peter told the cripple) he hath neither silver nor gold to give, than he who hath the largest purse of his own; that of Araunah is observable, 2 Sam. xxiv. 22. where we have his bountiful offer to King David, *Let my Lord the King take, and offer up what seems good unto him, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice;* this was much, and shewed his heart to be noble and large, as it follows, ver. 23. *All these things did Araunah, as a King, give unto the King;* yet one thing he did that amounted to more than all this, which was his hearty prayer to God for David's acceptance, and *Araunah said unto the King, the Lord thy God accept thee;* he might have done all the other for fear. A subject sometimes gives his prince, because he knows he may take though he gives it not; but by his praying for him, he discovereth his hearty affection to him.

SECT. I.—There are several weighty reasons for this duty.

First, From God.

Secondly, From satan.

Thirdly, From the saints prayed for.

And, Fourthly, From the saints praying.

First, From God.

1. They

1. They are the special object of his love; his heart is set upon them, his thoughts and providence are at work continually for them; others indeed do partake of divine bounty, but they may thank the saints' company and neighbourhood for it; when the gardener waters his beds of flowers, some runs down into the alleys, but had he no flowers there, he would save that pains; when once God hath got his whole family of saints home to himself in heaven, it will be quickly seen what God will do with the rest of the world; God dispenseth the same providence to them both, but not with the same affection, not to the same end: *He is the Saviour of all, but especially of those that believe*, 1 Tim. iv. 3.

He saves the saints with saving purposes; the wicked he saves temporally, to destroy them eternally; he saves them from a present sickness or danger, that they may ripen for hell; as we save our young wood for greater growth, and then cut it down for the fire. Now what shall be done for those to whom God declares so much love? We cannot do less than pray for them: By this we comply with God, and shew our content in his choice.

2. God hath made them the proper heirs of all his promises: Now promises are the ground of prayer: We are to pray for others, though wicked, not knowing but God may have a secret purpose of doing them good: But where there is grace, *hic se aperit decretum*, here God breaks open his decree: The fountain of his electing grace, which ran hitherto under-ground, now bursts forth, so that now you may, with fuller confidence, pray for such a one. When Paul begs prayers, to encourage his friends at the work for him, he assures them of his sincerity, Heb. xiii. 18. *Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.* As if he had said, you pray for one that God will not chide you for mentioning: It is an encouragement for a merchant to adventure, when he puts his stock into a good bottom.

3. They are a generation that alone honour God in the world: Indeed God honours himself upon others in their present lusts and future damnation: He makes their wrath praise him here, and his wrath poured on them shall praise him hereafter; but no thanks to them for all this, for they do their utmost to lay the honour of God in the dirt: But the saints are a people who are not merely passive, but active in the praising of God, it is their mother-language to bless the name of God, whatever is their work, this is their end and aim: *Whether they eat or drink, to do all to the glory of God.* Now upon this account we are to pray for saints above others; the first thing our Saviour teacheth us to pray for is, that the *Name of God be hallowed*, in order to which he directs us, in the very next words, to pray for his church

church and saints, as those who alone can hallow it; *Thy Kingdom come.*

SECT. II.—Secondly, From satan.

His great spite is against the saints: God owns them, therefore he hates them, and spits fire and brimstone at them: Where God is of one side, you may be sure to find the devil on the other; Indeed they are the only company that stand in his way. As for the wicked, he takes himself to be advanced, when they are exalted in the world: The father is honoured, when the child is preferred; but the saint's rising, portends his fall; this makes him bend all his force by temptation or persecution to procure their ruin, these are the stars he would stamp under his feet; the first murder in the world was of a saint, and Cain will kill Abel to the end of the world: In all broils and confusions of nations, these are the threatened party, therefore they need our prayers most.

Thirdly, From the saints prayed for.

They exceedingly desire prayers; the wicked, I confess, may do this also, but it is by fits, in a pang of fear or fright; thus Pharaoh sends in all haste for Moses, when the plagues of God are in his house and fields. The carnal Jews pray Samuel to pray for them, that they die not; but it was, when terrified with dreadful thunder and rain that fell, 1 Sam. vii.; yea, Simon Magus himself, smitten with horror at Peter's words, begs his prayers, *that none of these things which he had spoken, might come upon him*: but at another time, these wretches cared neither for the saints nor for their prayers. Pharaoh, who desired Moses at one time to pray for him, at another time chases him out of his presence, with a charge never to come at him more; but now the saints, they are covetous, yea ambitious, of the auxiliary prayers of their brethren, and those not the meanest among them neither; indeed as any is more eminent in grace, so more greedy of his brethren's help; the richer the tradesman is, the more he sets at work for him. Paul himself, Rom. xv. 30. is not ashamed to beg this boon of the meanest saint. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus' sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.* Did you ever hear a poor beggar at your door, or prisoner at the grate, beg more passionately? *for the Lord Jesus' sake, and for the Spirit's sake.* If ever you felt any warmth in your hearts from the blood of Christ or love of the Spirit comforting of you, *strive*, wrestle with me, till we together have got the victory, prevailed with God for this mercy.

2. As the saints are covetous of prayers, so they lot upon it that you do pray for them; yea, take up comfort before-hand, from the expectation of what they shall receive from them. *I know*

this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers, Phil. i. 19. *I trust that through your prayers I shall be given to you*, Phil. ii. 28. Where,

First, Observe Paul's modesty, he sinks and drowns his own prayers, and expresseth his faith in theirs.

Secondly, His confidence: he doubts not but they will pray, neither does he question the happy return of them into his bosom; as if he had said, if ye be faithful, ye will pray for me; so that we break our trust, and disappoint our brethren, if we forget them.

Thirdly, Saints are the honestest debtors you can deal with, they will pay you in your own coin; he that shews any kindness to a saint, is sure to have God for his paymaster; for it is their way to turn over their debts to God, and engage him to discharge their score to man. Onesiphorus had been a kind friend to Paul, and what does Paul for him? to prayer he goes, and desires God to pay his debts. *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he hath often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.*

SECT. III.—Fourthly, From the saints praying.

There is no duty God commands, but he pays the Christian well for the performance, and leaves him a loser that neglects it; there is enough in this duty we are speaking to, that may make it lovely and desirable in our eye; the best of saints have counted it a great privilege to be admitted into this noblest order. Paul *thanks God, that, without ceasing, he had Timothy in remembrance day and night in his prayers:* But wherein lies this mercy to have a heart to pray for our brethren?

First, It is a singular mercy to be instrumental to the grace or comfort of any saint, much more to be instrumental for the glorifying of God.

This a gracious heart prizeth highly, though it costs him dear to promote it: Now in praying, though but for one single saint, thou dost both: 2 Cor. i. 11. *You helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us, by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.* Paul begging prayers, inforceth his request with a double argument.

1. From the prevalency of joint-prayers; when twenty pull at a rope, the strength and force of every one is influential to the drawing of it; so in prayer, where many concur, all help; God looks at every one's faith and fervency exerted in the duty, and directs the answer to all.

2. From the harmony of joint-prayers; the fuller the concert in praises, the sweeter music in God's ear; joint prayers produce social praises; he that concurs in a prayer, and not in returning praise

praise, is like one that helps his friend into debt, but takes no care to bring him out.

Secondly, By praying for others, we increase our own joy.

When Paul saw the prayers which he had sown for the Thessalonian saints, (1 Thes.) come up in their faith and zeal, he is transported with joy, as an incomparable mercy bestowed upon himself, 1 Thes. iii. 9. *What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?* He had watered them with his prayers, God gives increment to their grace; from this his joy flourisheth, and his heart is so ravished, that he knows not what thanks to God are enough for the mercy he receives through their hands; truly the reason why we gain no more from the graces of our brethren is, because we venture no more prayers upon them.

Thirdly, This would be an undoubted evidence to prove ourselves saints, could we but heartily pray for them that are such.

Love to the brethren is often given as a character of a true saint. Now no act whereby we express our love to saints, stands more clear from scruples of insincerity, than this of praying for them. Will you say you love the saints, because you frequent their company, shew kindness to their persons, stand up in their defence against those that reproach them; or because you can suffer with them? All this is excellent, if sincere; yet how easy is it for vain-glory, or some other carnal end, to mingle with these? But if thou canst find thy heart in secret, where none of these temptations have such an advantage to corrupt thee, let out to God for them with a deep sense and feeling of their sins, wants, and sorrows; this will speak more for the sincerity of thy love, than all the former without this.

CHAP. XX.

The Application of the Point.

Use. MUST we pray above all for saints? woe then to those, who, instead of praying for them, had rather, with those, (Isa. lix. 15.) *Make a prey of them;* that instead of praying for them, can curse them, and drink to their confusion; haply 'tis not under the plain name of saints, but as wrapt up in the bear-skin of fanatic, puritan, or some other name of scorn, invented to cover their malice, so they can devour and tear them in pieces; the saints are a sort of people that none love, but those that are themselves such; it is a good gloss of Jerome, *Estote*

sancti, ut oratis pro sanctis ; be saints, and then you will pray for saints ; the righteous are an abomination to the wicked—it is a sect every where spoken against ; the feud began at first between Abel and Cain, and so spread over the whole world ; one generation takes up the cudgels against them, as another lays them down.

Hamilcar bequeathed his hatred against the Romans to his son, Hannibal, when he died ; so is the feud transmitted by the wicked from one generation to another against the saints ; nothing can quench their wrath, or take up the quarrel ; no moral perfections (which were they in others, would be thought lovely), let the saint be never so wise, meek, affable, and bountiful, yet this, that he is a Christian, is a *but*, that will blot all in the wicked world's thoughts. *Bonus vir, Cajus Sejus, sed malus tantum quod Christianus,* was the language in Tertullian's age ; Cajus Sejus had been a good man, if he had not had that with which he could not be good ; no near relation can wear off the spite ; Michal cannot bite in her scornful spirit, but jeers her husband to his face for his zeal before the Lord.

In a word, no benefit which accrues to the wicked by the saint's neighbourhood (and that is not a little) can make them lay down their hatred ; they are the only bail which God takes to keep a nation (when under his arrest) out of prison ; they are the cause of blessings to the families, towns, and kingdoms they live in, yet the butt at which their envenomed arrows are levelled against : The whole city is against Lot, not a man among them to take his part, so true and constant the wicked are to their own side.

Tertullian tells us of some heathen husbands, that liked their wives, though loose and wanton, and lived with them (when such) before they were converted to Christianity ; but when once they had embraced the faith, and thereby were made chaste, then put them away : Fathers that could bear undutiful rebellious carriage in their children, when once converted, and these amended, they turned them out of doors ; *Ut quisque hoc nomine emendatur, offendit*, as any were reformed in their lives by turning Christians, so they became offenders. It were well, if this were only the heathen's sin, but by woeful experience we find that the true Christian hath not more cruel enemies in the whole world, than some be that are of his own name. The sharpest persecutions of the church have been by those that were in the church. O what a dreadful account will such have to make in the great day, who profess the name of Christ, yet hate his nature in the saints ! who call Christ, Lord, yet persecute his best servants, and destroy his loyalest subjects ; these are the men that above all other shall feel the utmost of the Lord's fiery wrath in the day when

when he shall plead his people's cause, and avenge himself on their adversaries.

Use 2. Be exhorted to this duty of praying for saints.

You cannot do that which God will take more kindly at your hands. He himself puts this petition into their mouths, *Ask me of things to come concerning my sons*, Isa. xlv. 11. Courtiers frame their petitions according to their prince's liking; they are careful not to ask that which he is unwilling to give; but when they perceive he favours a person or a business, then they are ambitious to present the petition. Joab knew what he did in sending the woman of Tekoa to David, with a petition wrapt up in a handsome parable for Absalom the king's son; he knew the king's heart went strongly after him, and so the motion could not but be acceptable: and is not the Lord's heart gone after his saints? thy prayer for them, therefore, must needs come in good time, when it shall find the heart of God set upon the thing thou askest. This was it that God was so pleased with in Daniel, chap. ix. 22, 23. Now in your prayers for the saints, among other things that you pray for them, forget not these.

1. Pray for their lives.

They are such a blessing where they live, that they seldom fall, but the earth shakes under them; it is commonly a prognostic of an approaching evil when God takes them away by death. Jeroboam had but one son, in whom some good was found; he must die, and then the ruin of his father's family follows, 1 Kings xiv. 7. When Augustine dies, then Hyppo falls into the enemies' hands; if the wise man be gone that preserved the city, no wonder if its end hastens; God makes a way to let his judgments in upon the world, by taking the saints out of the world; when God chambers his children into the grave, a storm is at hand, Isa. xxvi.

It is, you see, of concernment to do our utmost to keep them among us, especially when their number is so few and thin already, that we may say, as once the prophet, concerning Israel, *We are as when they have gathered the summer fruits, or the grape-gleanings of the vintage*, Micah vii. 1. Did we indeed see them come up as thick in our young ones, as they fall in the old, we might say, a blessing is in them; these would be as hope-seeds at least for the next generation; but when a wide breach is made, and few to step into it, this is ominous. At Moses's death Joshua stood up in his place, and it went well with Israel's affairs; but when Joshua died, and a generation rose up that had not seen the wonders God had done for his people, and so rebelled, then went they to wreck apace, Judg. ii. 9, 10.

2. For their liberty and tranquillity.

Psal. cxxii. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.* Jerusalem was the place for their public worship; *thither the tribes went up unto the testimony of Israel, and to give thanks unto the name of the Lord*, ver. 4. So that by praying for Jerusalem's peace, is meant such serene times wherein the people of God might enjoy his pure worship without disturbance. The church hath always had her vicissitudes, sometimes fair, and sometimes foul weather; but her winter commonly longer than her summer: yea, at the same time that the sun of peace brings day to one part of it, another is wrapt up in a night of persecution.

Universal peace over all the churches is a great rarity; and where it is in any part of it enjoyed, some unkind cloud or other soon interposeth; the church's peace therefore is set out by *an half hour's silence*, Rev. viii. 1. When God gave the poor Jews a reviving after a tedious captivity, by moving Cyrus to grant them liberty to go and rebuild the house of God, how soon did a storm arise, and beat them from their work? One prince furthers them, another obstructs the work. The gospel-church, Acts ix. had a sweet breathing time of peace; but how long did it last? this short calm went before a sudden hurricane of persecution that falls upon them, chap. xii. Thus have the politic rulers of the world used the saints, as their carnal interest seemed to require; one while to countenance, another while to suppress them; no sort of people in the world can expect less favour from the world than the church; their only safety lies, therefore, to engage God to espouse their cause.

3. Pray for their love and unity among themselves.

The persecutor's sword (blessed be God) is not at the church's throat among us; but are not Christians at daggers-drawing amongst themselves? The question, in our days, hath oft been asked, Why the word preached (being as frequent, clear, and powerful as any former age ever enjoyed in this nation) hath been no more effectual to convert the wicked, or to edify the saints? I will not say this is the sole reason, but I dare deliver it as none of the least causes, and that is, the woeful divisions and rents amongst those that have made greatest profession of the truth.

1. For the saints, it is no wonder they should thrive no more under the word; for the body of Christ *is edified in love*, Eph. iv. So long as there is a fever upon the body, it cannot nourish. The apostles themselves, when wrangling, got little good by Christ's sermon, or the sacrament itself administered by Christ unto them; one would have thought that was such a meal, in the strength whereof (as so many Elijah's) they might have gone a long journey; but, alas, we see how weak they rise from it; one denies

denies his Master, and the rest in a fright forsake him; so unfit were they in such a temper to make a spiritual advantage of the best of means.

Again, For the wicked, it is no wonder that the word prevails no more on them; the divisions and scandals that have arisen among those that call themselves saints, have filled their hearts with prejudice against the holy truths and ways of God; Christ prays for his people's unity, *That the world may believe*, saith he, *that thou hast sent me*, John xvii. 21.

What is oftener in the mouths of many prophane wretches than this, We will believe them when they are all of one mind; and come over to them when they can agree among themselves: Who loves to put his head into an house on fire? This should, methinks, stir up all that wish well to the gospel to pray, and that instantly, for a re-union of their divided hearts; hot disputes will not do it—prayer, or nothing, can. Pliny saith of the pearls called Uniones, that their nature (though they be ingendered in the sea) partakes of the heavens more than the earth: The God of Peace can only set us at peace; if ever we be wise to agree, we must borrow our wisdom from above; this alone is pure and peaceable.

CHAP. XXI.

Sheweth that, not some, but all Saints, are the Subject of our Prayers and Intercession; and why.

The Third Proposition.

IN praying for saints, you must pray for all; I do not mean as the Papists, for quick and dead; prayer is a means to wait upon them in their way; at death, then they are at their journey's end; prayers are bootless for the dead sinner, and needless for the deceased saint; the wicked in that estate are beneath, the saint above, our prayers: we cannot help the wicked; the tree is fallen, and so it must lie.

We read of a change the body shall have after death; vile bodies may, but filthy souls cannot after death, be made glorious; if they go off the body filthy, so they shall meet it at the resurrection: the time to pray for them is now, while they live among you, or never; for death and hell come together to the sinner.—No sooner Dives's wretched soul is forced out of his body, but you hear it shriek in hell, Luke xvi. 22. *The rich man died, and*

was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment; but Abraham tells him, *there is a gulph fixed*, that forbids all intercouse betwixt heaven and him. Now what is that, but an irrevocable decree with which the wicked are sealed under everlasting wrath; if God receive no prayers from them, then not from others for them.

And as the wicked are beyond our help, so the saints above all need of our help, for they are in their port and haven: Prayer implies want, but saints departed are perfect, called therefore *the spirits of just men made perfect;* we need not beg a pardon for them, for the Lord acquits them, they are *just;* not for a supply of any good they want, they are *made perfect;* not to remove any pain they feel, for the Spirit saith, *Blessed are they that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours;* but they who invented this device, intended, it is like, gain to their own purse, rather than benefit to the others souls; it is a pick-purse doctrine, contrived to bring grist to the Pope's mill: But to leave this, they are the living saints, *your companions here in tribulation*, that are the subject of your prayers, and of these we are to encircle the whole community within our remembrance: the Papists speak much of a treasury the church hath; this indeed is the true treasury of the church, the common stock of prayers with which they all trade to heaven for one another; Paul tells us what a large heart he had, even for those whose *face he never saw in the flesh*, Col. i. 2. Take a few reasons for the point.

First, We are to love all the saints, therefore to pray for all.

Love, in a saint, is the picture of God's love to us; and God's love looks not asquint to one saint, more than another: that image is not of God's drawing, which is not like himself; nature may err in its productions, but not God in the grace he begets in his saint's bosom; the new creature never wants its true nature; if God loves all his children, then wilt thou all thy brethren, or not one of them: when Paul commends Christians for this grace of love, he doth it from this note of universality, Eph. i. 15. *After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints*, so Col. i. 4. Philem. 5.

Now if we love all, we cannot but pray for all; to say we love one, and not pray for him, is a solecism: Can a courtier love his friend, and not speak to his prince for him, when he may do him a favour by it? Love prompts a man to do that wherein he may express the greatest kindness to his friend: Mary pours the most precious ointment she hath upon Christ. Prayer, if of the right composition, is the most precious ointment thou canst bestow on the saints; save it not for some few of them that are of thy private society, or particular acquaintance, but let the sweet odour of it fill the whole house of the church; pray for all.

Secondly,

Secondly, We are to pray for all saints, because Christ prays for all; he carries all their names on his breast-plate.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; he leaves not one of the number out of his remembrance; the elder brother was priest to the whole family, so is Christ our elder brother to the whole household of believers.

Now Christ's intercession is a pattern for our prayers; we cannot indeed pray for all, as he doth; he prays for them not only in the lump, but for every individual saint by name; *I have prayed* (Peter) *for thee*, Luke xxii. yea, not only for every person by name, but for their particular wants and occasions: *I have prayed that thy faith fail not.* Christ takes notice of that very grace, which was in most imminent danger, and secures it by his intercession. O what unspeakable comfort is this to a saint, that he in particular should be spoken of in heaven, and every want or temptation he laboureth with, be taken notice of, and provided for by Christ's meditation! Thus indeed we cannot pray for all, because we know but few of their persons, and little of the state and condition of those we know; neither is there need we should: our general suffrage and vote is as kindly taken, as if we could descend to particular instances; God knows the mind of the spirit in our prayers on earth to be for the same things which Christ insisteth on in his intercession in heaven.

Thirdly, We must pray for all saints, or else we can pray for none.

1. We cannot pray really for any, if not for all; he that prays for one saint, and desires not good to another, prays not for that one as a saint, but under some other consideration, as wife, friend, child, or the like, (a saint cloathed with such and such circumstances) for *a quatenus ad omne valet consequentia;* he that loves a man, because a man loves all, because the same human nature is found in all, and all saints have the same nature.

2. We cannot pray acceptably for one, except for all; and so we wrong those for whom we do pray, by leaving them out for whom we also should. Joseph would not hear the Patriarchs for Simeon's release, till they brought Benjamin over to him also; if thou wouldst be welcome to God in praying for any, carry all thy brethren to him in thy devotions, leave none behind. *Are here all thy children?* saith Samuel to Jesse; he would not sit down, till the stripling David was fetched to complete the company.

May be thou art earnest in prayer for thy near neighbour Christians, but dost thou not forget others that are further off? Thou rememberest the church of God at home, but dost thou lay the miseries of the churches abroad to heart? What if God should ask

ask thee now, *Are here all thy brethren?* Are there none but these that live under thy eye to be remembered? Have not I children, and you brethren elsewhere in the world to be thought upon? The Jews in Babylon were not to forget Jerusalem, because of the great distance: *Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind*, Jer. li. 50.

CHAP. XXII.

The Application of the Point.

Use 1. O What a rich merchant is the saint, who hath a stock going in so many hands!

In heaven Christ is heard at prayer for him, on earth his brethren; what can this man want? Christ hath such interest in his Father's heart, that he can deny him nothing; the saints such interest in Christ's, that he will not deny them; so the Christian's trade goes smoothly on in both worlds. Think of this, Christian, for thy comfort, wherever a child of God is living upon earth, there hast thou a factor to traffick with heaven for thy good; let this help thy faith in putting up thy own private prayers, knowing that thou prayest in communion and fellowship with others, even when thou art alone in thy closet, expect an answer to more than thy own prayer; it is uncharitableness not to pray for others, and pride, not to expect a benefit from the prayers of others.

Secondly, it teacheth us how inquisitive we should be of the affairs of our brethren, and state of the church, that so we may pray with a more bowelly sense of their wants for them.

Nehemiah, when he heard of some that were come out of Judea, inquires how it fared with his brethren there; and from the sad report he heard of their afflictions and reproaches, is put into a bitter passion, which he emptied with prayers and tears for them, into the bosom of God, Neh. i. 4. How could he have done this so feelingly, had he not first been acquainted with their distressed condition? We are many of us asking oft, what news? and reading books of intelligence, foreign and national? but is it as Athenians, or as Christians? to fill our heads, or to affect our hearts? to furnish us with matter of chat, and talk by the fireside with our neighbours, or of prayer to our God?

Thirdly, Labour to get a wide heart in prayer for all the saints.

God (it is said) gave Solomon a large heart of knowlege and wisdom, as the sand of the sea, 1 Kings iv. 29. Behold a mercy greater

greater than that to Solomon is here; a large heart is better than a large head, to do good, than to know it; nothing is more unworthy than a selfish spirit; no selfishness worse than that which is vented in prayer: A heathen could blame that Athenian, who in a drought prayed for his own city, saying, *O Jupiter, rain upon the fields of the Athenians;* but forgot that his neighbours wanted as well as himself.

Many heathens were great admirers of this virtue of charity; take one instance for all: It was a law among the Romans, that none should come near the Emperor's tent in the night upon pain of death; now there was one night a certain soldier apprehended, standing near the Emperor's tent with a petition to deliver unto him, who was therefore presently to be executed; but the Emperor hearing the noise from within his pavilion, called out, saying, If it be for himself, let him die, if for another, spare his life; being examined, it was found his petition was for two of his fellow-soldiers that were taken asleep on the watch; so both he escaped death, and they punishment. Was this office of charity so pleasing to an earthly prince, as to dispense with a law for its sake? O how acceptable then to our merciful God is it, to intercede for our fellow-saints? But the more to provoke you to the exercise of this duty in its full breadth and latitude, viz.—for all saints, consider,

First, This praying for all saints, will prove thy love to saints sincere.

A man in praying for himself, or his relations, stands not at that advantage to see the actings of pure grace, as when he prays for such as have not these carnal dependencies on him; when thou prayest for thyself in want or sickness, how knowest thou that it is any more than the natural cry of the creature? Is it for thy family thou prayest? Still thy flesh hath an interest in the work, and may help to quicken thee, if it be not the chief spring to set thee a going; but when thy heart beats strongly with a sense of any others misery, that hath nothing to move thee, but his Christianity to be his remembrancer, and thou canst in secret plead with God for him as feelingly, as if thou didst go on thy own errand, truly thou breathest a gracious spirit.

Secondly, as it will speak for the truth of thy grace, so for the height and vigour of it.

It is corruption that contracts our hearts; they were none of the best Christians of whom Paul gives this character, Phil. ii. 21. *They sought their own;* as the heart advanceth in grace, so it widens, and grows more public-spirited; the higher a man ascends a hill, the larger his prospect; one that stands upon the ground, cannot look over the next hedge; his eye is confined within the compass of his own wall; thus the carnal spirit thinks of

of none but his own estate or stake, feels not the water till it comes into his own cabin; whereas grace elevates the soul, and the more grace a man hath, the more it will enable him to look from himself into the condition of his brethren; such a one, he partakes of the nature of heavenly bodies, which shed their influence down upon the whole world; especially this would speak grace high in its actings, if these circumstances concur with it.

1. When a person is himself swimming in abundance of all enjoyments, and can then lay aside his own joy to weep and mourn for, and with any afflicted saints, though at never so great a distance from them; thus did Nehemiah for his brethren at Jerusalem, when himself was in a warm nest, and had all the enjoyments that so great a prince's court could afford; it is not usual for any but those of great grace, to feel the cords of the church's afflictions through a bed of down on which themselves lye; it must be a David that can prefer *Jerusalem above his chief joy.*

2. On the other hand, when in the depth of our own personal troubles and miseries, we can yet reserve a large room in our prayers for any other saints, speaks a great measure of grace: It shewed the Romans strength and courage to be great, that they could spare several legions to send into Spain for the help of their friends there, while Hannibal was near their own walls with a puissant army: To be able to lend auxiliary prayers to other afflicted saints, or abroad to the church of God, when thou thyself art engaged deeply with private sorrows, does signify a very gracious spirit.

3. When in our own distresses, we can entertain the tidings of any other saints mercies with joy and thankfulness; this requires great grace indeed, to act two so contrary parts at the same time. The prosperity of others, too often breeds envy and discontent in them that want it; if therefore thou canst praise God for other mercies, while the tears stand in thy eyes for thy own miseries, it is a rare temper, flesh and blood never learnt thee it, thou mayest be sure.

To shut up this with a caution; though we are to pray for all saints, yet some call for a more special remembrance at our hands.

1. Those that are near to us by other relations.

First, By bond of nature as well as of grace, Philemon, ver. 16. *A brother, beloved, especially to me; but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord:* It is true, the bond of the spirit is more sacred than that of the flesh; *Sanctior est copula cordis quam corporis;* yet when that of the flesh is twisted with the other, it adds, as force to the affection, so argument to the duty; therefore saith Paul, *much more unto thee;* charity may begin, though it must not end at home.

Again,

Again, by domestic relation, society and communion, whether civil or religious, these give an enforcement to the duty, master for servant, and servants for masters; minister for people, and people for minister: He that starves his family is not like to feast his neighbours; he that is a churl to his neighbours, is not like to be overkind to strangers; so he that prays not for those who by these relations stand so near to him, is very unlike to abound in this duty for others.

2. Those that are in distress.

Whoever you forgot, remember these: If one be sick in our family, we will send him his portion before any that are at the table; this is a fit season for love; a friend for adversity is as proper as fire is for a winter's day: Job's friends chose the right time to visit him, but took not the right course of improving their visit; had they spent the time in prayer for him, which they did in hot disputes with him, they had profited him, and pleased God more.

Again, This is the season that the tempter is busy; this lion walks abroad in the night of affliction, hoping then to make the Christian his prey, and if he wakes, to make a prey of him; shall not we watch to pray for him?

Again, This is the season of God's most speedy answering our prayers; *In the day that I cried, thou heardest me*, Psal. cxxxviii. that is, in the day of affliction; indeed now is the time when the spirit of Christ will be stirring us up to pray; and when should we send our letters, but when the post calls? He that stirs thee up to pray for them, will be as careful to deliver up thy prayers, and see an answer returned.

3. Such of the saints as are of public place and use: You pray for many here, while you pray for one.

4. Such as have expressly desired, and engaged you to remember them at the throne of grace: Among debts, specialities are paid in the first place. Thou art a debtor to all thy brethren, and owest them a remembrance in thy prayers, but more especially them to whom thou hast particularly promised it: This is, as it were, a bond under thy hand given for further security of paying this debt to thy friend; whoever thou forgettest, remember him. Did the Butler's conscience accuse him for not remembering his promise to Joseph, who had engaged him (when he was restored to court) to intercede with Pharaoh for him? *This day*, saith he, *I remember my faults*, Gen. xli. Much more hast thou cause to confess thy faults, who forgettest to make mention of them to the Lord, that have solemnly desired it at thy hands; to have promised the payment of a sum of money, and to have failed, were not greater dishonesty. Thou mayest prejudice his soul more by disappointing him of thy prayer, than his estate could

could suffer for want of thy money; how knowest thou, but the mercy he wants is stopped, while thy prayer comes to heaven for it? That other saints obtain by their prayers for us, what sometimes we do not by our own, is clear from Job xlii. 8.

VERSE XIX. XX.

And for me, that Utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel;

For which I am an Ambassador in Bonds.

CHAP. I.

Sheweth, It is a Duty to desire the Prayers of others, and why; it is also shewn, that to do this, doth no wrong to Christ's Mediation for us: with a short Application.

THE apostle having laid out this duty of prayer in its full compass, taking all saints within its circumference; he comes now to apply this general rule, and claims a share in it himself; *and for me:* When he bids them pray for all saints, he surely cannot be shut out of their prayers, who is not the least in the number.

In the words: First, Here is an exhortation, or Paul's request for himself, and in him for all ministers of the gospel; *and for me.*

Secondly, The matter of his request; *That utterance may be given unto me:* Not that he would confine and determine them in their prayers to this request alone; but propounds it as a principal head to be insisted on by them on his behalf.

Thirdly, The end why he desires this; *That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.*

Fourthly, A double argument to back and enforce this his request.

1. Taken from his office; *for which I am an ambassador.*
2. From his present afflicted state, *an ambassador in bonds.*

First, Of the first, his request: *and for me.*

1. We

1. We may note here, That people are to be taught the duty they owe to their minister, as well as to others: though indeed no duty is harder for the minister to press, or for the people to hear; for him to preach with humility and wisdom, or for them to receive without prejudice.

SECT. I.—Secondly, It is not only our duty to pray for others, but also to desire the prayers of others for ourselves.

If a Paul turns beggar, and desires the remembrance of others for him, who then needs it not? This hath been the constant practice of the saints: Sometimes they call in the help of their brethren upon special occasions to pray with them. Thus Daniel, chap. ii. 18. when required to interpret the king's dream, makes use of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, *his companions; then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to these, that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret.* Daniel would not give an answer to the king, till he had got an answer from God; to prayer, therefore, he goes: no doubt he forgot not his errand in his closet, when at his solitary devotions; but withal he calls in help to join in social prayer with him; he sends for them to his house, where it is probable they prayed together for the mutual quickening of their affections, and strengthening of their petition, by this their united force; wherefore, verse 23. he acknowledgeth the mercy as an answer to their concurrent prayers: *I thank thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast made known unto me now, what we desired of thee.*

This justifies the saints' practice, when in any great strait of temptation or affliction, they get some other of the faithful to give a lift with them at this duty; sometimes we have them desiring their brethren's prayers for them, when they cannot conveniently have it with them: Thus Esther sets the Jews in Shushan to prayer for her, Esther iv. 16. So our apostle, in many of his epistles, desires the saints to carry his name with them to the throne of grace, Rom. xv. 30. 2 Cor. i. 10. 11. Col. iv. 3. Phil. xxii. 8. And not without great reason. For,

1. God hath made it a debt, which one saint owes to another. Now not to desire this debt to be paid, which God hath charged our brethren with, is to undervalue the mercy and goodness of our God: Should a legacy be left us by a friend, were it not a despising of his kindness, not to call upon the heir who is to pay it? Surely God accounts he doth us a kindness herein, and therefore may take it ill, not to ask for it; it is not our usage to lose a debt for want of a demand, and this is none of the least we have owing us.

2. Many are the gracious promises that are made to such prayers of the faithful, one for another.

John

John i. 15, 16. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them.* But you will say, How can the prayer of one obtain forgiveness for another? I answer, None is forgiven for the faith of another, this must be personal; but the believing fervent prayer of one, is an excellent means to obtain the grace of repentance and faith for another, whereby he may come to be forgiven; so James v. 16. *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*: Now in not desiring our brethren's help in this kind, we make no use of these promises (the proper end of which is, to encourage us to call in the auxiliary aid of others), as in such passages of scripture might have been well spared, for any need we have of them; should we see a piece of ground never sown or fed, we might well say, the ground is barren, or the owner a bad husband; either the promise is empty and useless, or we that do not improve it, are worse husbands for our souls: But we cannot say so of the promise, if we consider the great fruit and advantage which the saints in all ages have reaped from it. Did not Daniel get the knowledge of a great secret, as a return of his companions' prayers with him? Did not Job's friends escape a great judgment that hung over their heads at his intercession? What a miraculous deliverance had Peter, at the prayers of a few saints gathered together on his behalf? Bring not therefore an evil report upon this promise, seeing such sweet clusters as these are to be shewn that have been gathered from it.

SECT. II.—3. Else we are guilty of quenching the spirit of prayer, which may be done in ourselves, and others also.

First, By this we may quench it in ourselves, partly, because we neglect a duty: we are bid *to confess our sins one to another*; and for what end, but to have the benefit of mutual prayers? The same spirit which stirs thee up to pray for thyself, will excite thee in many cases to set others at prayer for thee; which if thou dost not, thou overlayest his motions, and so committest a sin.

Again, Thou quenchest the spirit of prayer in thyself, by depriving thyself of that assistance which thou mightest receive in thy own prayers through theirs: for the spirit conveys his quickening grace to us in the use of instruments and means; he that doth not hear the word preached, quenches his spirit, because God useth this as bellows to blow up and enkindle the saint's grace; so he that desires not the prayers of others, quencheth the spirit of prayer in himself, because the exercise of their grace in prayer for thee, may fetch down more grace to be poured in unto thee.

Secondly, Thou mayest be accessary to the quenching of the spirit

spirit in others, because thou hinderest the acting of those graces in them, which would have been drawn forth in prayer for thee, hadst thou acquainted them with thy condition: fire is quenched by substracting fuel, as well as by throwing on water; by opening thy wants or desires to thy brethren, thou feedest the spirit of prayer in them, as they have new matter administered to work upon; by acquainting them with the merciful providences of God to thee, thou prickest a song of praise for them: How many groans and sighs should God in prayer have had from thy neighbour saints, hadst thou not bit in thy temptations and afflictions from their knowledge? what peals of joy and thankfulness would they have rung, hadst thou not concealed thy mercies from them?

4. To express the humble sense we have of our own weakness and the need we have of others' help.

Humble souls are fearful of their own strength; they that have little, desire partners with them in their trade; but when they conceit their own private stock to be sufficient, then they can trade by themselves: *Now ye are full, ye are rich, and have reigned as kings without us*, saith Paul of the self-conceited Corinthians; the time was, you thought you had need of Paul's preaching to you, and praying for you, but now ye reign without us. O how many are there when time was, could beg prayers of every Christian they met, nothing but wants and complaints could be heard from them, which made them beg help of all they knew, to pray their corruptions down, and their graces up; but now they have left the beggar's trade, and reign in an imaginary kingdom of their self-conceited sufficiency; certainly as it shews want of charity not to pray for others, so no want of pride not to desire prayers from others.

Fifthly, That we may prevent satan's designs against us.

He knows very well what an advantage he hath upon the Christian, when severed from his company; wherefore he labours what he can to hinder the conjunction of his solitary prayers, with the auxiliary aid his brethren might lend him. Samson's strength lay not in a single hair, but his whole lock; the saint's safety lies in communion, not in solitude and single devotion; how many, alas, concealing their temptations from others, have found their sorrows grow upon them after all their own private endeavours, and wrestlings in secret against them? like one, who, when his house is on fire, tries to quench it himself, but is not able, and so hazards the loss of all he hath for want of timely calling his neighbours to his help.

Sixthly, and lastly, The love we owe to our brethren requires it.

The saints here live where none else love them but themselves, therefore they had need to make much of one another: Now this of desiring their prayers, carries a three-fold expression of love to them.

1. By this we acknowledge the grace of God in our brethren, or else it is supposed we would not employ them in such a work. He that desires a friend to present a petition to the king on his behalf, shews, he believes him to be in favour, and one that hath some interest in the prince. Now what more honourable testimony can we give to another, than to own him as a child of God, one whose prayers are welcome to heaven? We are bid to *prefer every one his brother in honour*. Now no one way can we do this more, than by making use of their help at the throne of grace, to be our remembrancers to the Lord.

2. By this we do our utmost to interest our brethren in the mercy we desire them to pray for.

Were a merchant to send some commodity to Turkey or Spain, which he knows will make a gainful return, it would be a great favour to take others into partnership with him in the adventure; and what voyage is gainful like this of prayer? and whoever shares in the duty, is partner in the mercy.

3. By this we confirm them in a confidence of our readiness to pray for them.

What consists neighbourhood in, but a readiness to reciprocate kindnesses one to another? when that is at the service of one neighbour, which is in the house of another. Now who will be bold or free with his neighbour, to take a kindness from him, that is not willing to receive the like? Be ye strange to your friend, and you teach him to be so to yourself; nothing endears Christians more in love, than an open heart one to another; a friend should have no cabinet in his bosom, to which he allows not his friend a key.

SECT. III.—Object. *But do we not, by desiring our fellow-saints' prayers, intrench upon Christ's mediatory office?*

Answ. No, surely, Christ would not command that which would be a wrong to himself; there is a great difference betwixt our desiring Christ to pray for us, and our fellow-brethren; we desire Christ to present our persons and prayers, expecting acceptation of both through his blood and intercession; but no such matter from the prayers of our brethren—we only desire them as friends to bear us company to the throne of grace, there to present our prayers in a communion together, expecting the welcome of both their, and our prayers, not from them, but from Christ; relying on Christ to procure the welcome both to our prayers and theirs, at our heavenly Father's hand.

Object.

Object. 2. *But why then may we not desire the prayers of the deceased saints, for the same purpose that we desire the prayers of those that live yet with us?*

Answ. First, We have no precept or example for this in the word; and unbidden there, in duties of worship, is forbidden; we must not *be wise above what is written*: Not to use the means which God hath appointed, is a great sin, which was Ahaz's case; but to invent ways or means more than God hath appointed, is far worse. It is bad enough for a subject not to keep the king's laws; but far worse for him to presume to mint a law of his own head; the first is undutiful, but the latter is a traitor.

Secondly, We have no way of expressing our thoughts and desires to the saints departed; why should we pray to them that cannot hear what we say? or where is the messenger to send our minds by? or which is the word in scripture that saith, they hear in heaven what we pray on earth?

Thirdly, It is the prerogative of Christ to be the only agent in heaven for his saints on earth. To which of the angels or saints did God say, *Sit thou at my right hand?* In the outward temple, we find the whole congregation praying, but into the holy of holiest entered none but the high-priest, with his perfume; every saint is a priest to offer up prayers for himself and others on earth; but Christ only, as our high-priest, intercedes in heaven for us. The glorious angels and saints there, no doubt, wish well to the church below; but it is Christ's office to receive the incense of his militant saint's prayers, which they send up from this outward temple here below to heaven, and to offer it with all their desires to God; so that to employ any in heaven besides Christ to pray for us, is to put Christ out of office.

SECT. IV.—*Use.* First, It reproves those into whose hearts it never yet came to beg prayers for their own souls.

Surely they are great strangers to themselves, and ignorant what a privilege they lose; as Christ said to the woman of Samaria, If thou hast known the gift of God, and who it is that asks, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given. Did poor souls know who the saints are, what favourites with God, and how prevalent their prayers are with him, they would not willingly be left out of their remembrance. I never knew any, but as soon as God began to work upon them, though it were no more than to awaken their consciences, but they thought this worth the desiring; it is natural for men in straits to crave help. A servant or a child, when master or father are displeased, and blows are threatened, if they know any that have interest in their favour, and are more likely to prevail with them than others, them they intreat to become suitors for them. When hunger

and want pinch the poor, then if they have any neighbour to be their friend, to speak to the parish for them, he shall soon hear of them; now were the sense of their wants or troubles of a higher nature, would they not be as earnest to desire prayers for their souls, as now they are to beg bread for their bodies?

Well, you that fear God, and live among such, do your duty, though they have not hearts to desire it at your hands; pray over their stupid souls before the Lord. When a friend is sick, and his senses are gone, you do not stay to send for the physician till he comes to himself, and is able to do it for him. You had need make the more haste to God for such as these, lest they go away in this apoplexy of conscience, and so be past praying for.

Secondly, Those who desire prayers of God's people, but hypocritically, and they are such as set others on work, but pray not for themselves, a certain sign of a naughty heart.

Thus Pharaoh often called for Moses to pray for him and his land, but we read not that ever he made any address himself to God, but thought it enough to send another on his errand; whereas a gracious soul will be sure to meet him he employs at the work: *I beseech you* (saith Paul) *to strive together with me* in your prayers to God for me; he did not slip the collar off his own neck, to put it on another's, but drew together with them in it; else they that pray for thee, may pray the mercy away from thee.

Thirdly, Such that desire prayers of others, but it is only in some great pinch.

If their chariot be set fast in some deep slough of affliction, then they send in all haste for some to draw them out with their prayer; who at another time change their thoughts of the saints, their prayers, yea, and of God himself: The frogs once gone, and Moses hears no more of Pharaoh, till another plague rubs up his memory. Moses he hears not Pharaoh cry, till Pharaoh hears the frogs croak: Thus, as they say of coral, it is soft in the water where it grows, and hard when taken out. Many their consciences are soft and tender whilst sleeping in affliction, but hard and stout when that is removed. Pharaoh, that so often called Moses up to prayer, at last could not endure the sight of him; but forewarned him for ever coming in his sight: O take heed of this; when once the wretch came to that pass, and so strangely changed his note, as to drive Moses from him, that had so often bailed and rescued him out of the hands of divine vengeance, then he had not long to live; for he removed the very dam, and lift up the very sluice, to let in ruin upon himself.

Fourthly, Such as desire others to pray for them, but vaingloriously, to gain reputation for religion.

Beware

Beware of this, yet charge not all for the hypocrisy of some; neither deprive thyself of the benefit of others' prayers, out of an imaginary fear, lest thou shouldst play the hypocrite therein; watch thy heart, but wave not the duty. Because some have strangled themselves with their own garters, wilt thou therefore be afraid to wear thine? Or, because some canting beggars go about the country to shew their sores, which they desire not to have cured; wilt not thou therefore when wounded go to the chirurgeon?

CHAP. II.

The People's Duty of Praying for the Ministers of the Gospel, with several Reasons of it.

FROM this request of the apostle, we may note, that the ministers of the gospel are in an especial manner to be remembered in the saints' prayers; and that,

SECT. I.—First, In regard of God, whose message they bring.

They come about this work, and deliver his errand; not to pray for them, will be interpreted, you wish not well to the business they have in hand for him; they do not only come from God, but with Christ: *We as workers together with him, beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain*, 2 Cor. vi. 9. Christ and the minister go into the pulpit together, a greater than man is there; master and servant are both at work.

Again, The blessing of the minister's labour is from God.

Not the hand that sets the plant, or sows the seed, but God's blessing, gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6. When Melancthon was first converted, the light of the gospel shone with so clear and strong a beam on his own eyes, that he thought he should convert all he preached unto; he deemed it was impossible his hearers should withstand that truth, which he saw with so much evidence; but he afterwards found the contrary, which made him say, *I see now that the old Adam is too hard for the young Melancthon.* God carries the key by his girdle, that alone can open hearts, and prayer is the key to open his; when Christ intended to send forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he sets them solemnly to prayer, Mat. ix. *ult.*

Many are the promises which he hath given to the ministers of the gospel for their protection, that he will keep these stars in his right hand, or else they had been on the ground, and

stamped under foot long ere this, for their assistance and success in the work ; *I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say*, Exod. iv. 12. *Go, preach, I am with you to the end of the world*, Mat. xxviii. Wherefore are these promises, but to be shot back again in prayers to God, that gave them?

SECT. II.—2. In regard of the ministers themselves ; there is not a greater object of pity and prayer in the whole world, than the faithful ministers of Christ ; if you consider,

1. The importance of their work.

It is temple-work, and that is weighty ; which made Paul, that had the broadest shoulders of all his brethren, cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things? I am doing a great work*, said Nehemiah, chap. vi. ver. 3. But what was that to this? No work more hazardous to miscarry in than this ; it is sad enough to drop to hell from under the pulpit, to hear the gospel, and yet to perish ; but O how dismal to fall out of it thither for unfaithfulness in the work? The consideration of this made Paul so bestir him : *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.*

2. It is a laborious work.

Know them which labour among you, and admonish you, 1 Thes. i. 12. *Those who labour in the word and doctrine*, which labour to weariness : he that preaches as he should, shall find it a work, not a play ; not a work of an hour, while speaking in the pulpit, but a load that lies heavy on his shoulders, all the week long ; a labour that spends the vitals, and consumes the oil which should feed the lamp of nature ; such a labour, in a word, as makes old age and youth often meet together. The Jews took Christ to be about fifty years old, when he was little above thirty, John viii. 57. I find some give this reason of it, because Christ had so macerated his body with labour in preaching, fasting, and watching, that it aged his very countenance, and made him look older than he was : Other callings are, many of them, but as exercise to nature, they blow off the ashes from its coal, and help to discharge nature of those superfluities which oppress it ; who eats his bread more heartily, and sleeps more sweetly, than the ploughman? But the minister's work debilitates nature ; it is hard for him to eat and work too : like the candle, he wastes while he shines ; whatever work is thought harder than other, we have it borrowed to set forth the minister's labour ; they are called soldiers, watchmen, husbandmen, yea, their work is set out by the pangs of a woman in travail ; some indeed have easier labours than other, those who find more success of their ministry than their brethren, but who can tell the throes that their souls feel, who all the time of their ministry go in travail, and bring forth dead children at last?

3. It is a work opposed by hell and earth.

First,

First, By hell.

The devil never liked temple-work; he that was at Joshua's right hand to resist him, is at the minister's elbow to disturb him, and that both in study and pulpit also; *I would have come*, saith Paul, *but satan hindered*; who can tell all the devices that satan hath to take the minister off, or hinder him in his work? One while he discourageth him, that he is ready, with Jonah, to run away from his charge; another while he is blowing of him up with pride; even Paul himself hath a thorn given him in his flesh, to keep pride out of his heart; sometimes he roils him with passion, and leavens his zeal into sourness and unmercifulness; this the disciples were tainted with, when they called for fire to come down from heaven upon those that stood in their way.—Sometimes he chills their zeal, and intimidates their spirits into cowardice and self-pity: Thus Peter favoured himself, when he denied his master; and when at another time he dissembled with the Jews, to curry their favour.

2. It is opposed by the wicked world.

To be a minister, saith Luther, *is nothing else but to derive the world's wrath and fury upon himself:* How are they loaden with reproaches? This dirt lies so thick nowhere, as on the minister's coat; what odious names did the best of men, the apostles themselves, go under? And it were well they would only smite them with the tongue; but you shall find, in all ages, persecutors have thirsted most after their blood; the persecution in the Acts begins with the cutting off of James's head; seven thousand could lie better hid in Jezebel's time, than one prophet; these are the burdensome stones, which every one is lifting at, though none can do it without bruising their own fingers; in every national storm almost, these are taken up to be thrown overboard for those that raised it: How many are there of an opinion, that nothing keeps them from seeing happy days, but the standing of them and their office? O miserable happiness, which cannot be bought and purchased, but with the ruin of those that bring the tidings of peace and salvation to them all! Such a happiness this would be, as the sheep had in the fable, when persuaded to have the dogs that kept the wolves off, killed; or as passengers at sea would have, when their pilot is thrown overboard. In a word, such a happiness as the Jews had, when Christ was taken out of the way by their murderous hands; they slew him to preserve themselves from the Romans destroying their city, but brought them with irreparable ruin by this very means upon their own head.

4. That which adds weight to all the former is, that the men who are to bear this heavy burden, and to conflict with all these difficulties and dangers, are those who have no stronger shoulders

than others, for they are men subject to the like infirmities with their brethren. Now will not all this melt you into compassion towards them, and your compassion send you to prayer for them? Shall they stand in the face of death and danger, where satan's bullets, and man's also, fly so thick, and you not be at pains to raise a breast-work before them for their defence by your prayers?

SECT. III.—3. In regard of yourselves; love to yourselves will plead to pray for them.

1. Consider the ministry is an office set up on purpose for your sakes.

It was never intended for the exalting of a few men above their brethren, but for the service of your faith; the gifts that Christ hath given to men, Ephes. iv. (that is, their office and abilities to discharge it), they are both for the edifying of the body of Christ; and will you not pray for those that, from one end of the year to the other, are at work for you? If you had but a child or servant sent abroad about your worldly business, would you not send a prayer after him? Thus did good Jacob, when his children went on his errand to Egypt, *God Almighty give you mercy before the man.* Will not you do thus much for your poor minister, and pray God Almighty go with him, when in his study to prepare, and when in the pulpit to deliver, what he hath prepared for our souls.

Secondly, The minister's miscarriage is dangerous to the people; therefore pray for them, lest you be led into temptation by their falls.

The sins of teachers, are the teachers of sin; if the nurse be sick, the child is in danger to suck the disease from her, that lies at her breast; if the minister be tainted with an error, it is strange if many of his people should not catch the infection; when if he be loose and scandalous in his life, he is like a common well or fountain, corrupted and muddied, at which all the town draw their water.

The devil aimed at more than Peter, when he desired leave to try a fall with him: Luke xxii. 31. *Simon, Simon, satan hath desired to winnow thee.* He knew his fall was like to strike up the heels of many others; the minister's practice makes a greater sound than his doctrine; they who forgot his sermon, will remember his example, to quote it for their apology and defence when time serves. *Peter withdraws, and other Jews dissembled with him,* Gal. ii. 12, 13. Truly, friends, your ministers are but men, and of no stronger make than yourselves—men subject to the like passions: He among them that presumes he shall not slide into an error, or fall into a sin, is bolder than any promise

in

'n the word gives him leave; they need your prayers as much as any, and these most, that fear their danger least.

3. By praying for the minister, you take the most hopeful way to profit by his ministry.

Such a soul as this may come in expectation to have a portion laid on his trencher, his meal is spoke for; and such guests as send to heaven before they come to an ordinance, are most likely to have the best entertainment. He that hears a sermon, and hath not prayed for the minister, and the success of his labours, sits down to his meat before he hath craved a blessing; he plays the thief to his own soul, while he robs the minister of the assistance his prayers might have brought him in from heaven. Pinch the nurse, and you starve the child; the less the minister is prayed for, the less it is to be feared will the people profit by him.

4. By praying for the minister, you do not only render the word he preacheth more effectual to yourselves, but you also interest yourselves in the good his ministry does to others.

As there is a way of partaking in others' sins, so in others' holy services. He that strengthens the hands of a sinner any way in his wicked practices, makes his sin his own, and shall partake with him in the wages due to the work, when the day of reckoning comes. So he that strengthens the minister's hand in his holy work, whether by prayer, countenance, or relief of his necessities, becomes a partaker with him in his service, and shall not be left out in the reward, Mat. x. 40. We read there of *a prophet's reward* given to private Christians; they who communicate with the minister in his labour, by any subserviency to it, shall share in the reward; when God comes to reward his prophets for their faithful service, then Obadiah that hid them from the fury of their persecutors; then Onesiphoros, that refreshed their bowels; yea, then all those faithful ones that put up their fervent prayers for the free course of the gospel in their ministry, shall be called in to share with them in the reward.—He that hath but a fifteenth part in a ship is an owner, as well as he that hath more; and when the voyage is over, he hath his share in the return that is made, proportionable to his part. O what an encouragement is this to have a stock going in this bottom? Yea, to venture deeper than ever at the throne of grace for the now-despised ministers of Christ, seeing heaven's promise is our insuring office to secure all we send to sea upon this account.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Wherein is shewn, what the faithful Ministers of the Gospel chiefly desire Prayers for; a Threefold Importance of the Apostle's Request, when he desires Utterance may be given him; with some short Notes therefrom.

2. THE second branch in the general division of the words follows; and contains the matter of the apostle's request to the church of Ephesus; or what he desires them to mention to God in his behalf—*That Utterance may be given to me.*

SECT. I.—Where observe, first, the spirituality of his desire: he sets them not a-praying for carnal things, the world's honour, or riches; no, we hear him not so much as mention his necessities and outward wants, which he being now a prisoner, it is like he was no great stranger to; but they are spiritual wants he most groans under—he desires the charity of their prayers, more than of their purse.

Secondly, Observe the public concernment of that he begs prayers for, *That utterance may be given to me;* this is not a personal privilege, that would redound only to his own private advantage, but which renders him useful to others, that which may fit him for his public employment in the church; from which we may gather this note:

A faithful minister's heart runs more on his work, than on himself; that which he chiefly desires is, how he may best discharge his ministerial trust. No doubt Paul spoke out of the abundance of his heart; that comes out first of which his heart was most full, and for which his thoughts were most solicitous; as if he had said, if you will take me into your prayers, let this be your request, *That utterance may be given to me:* wherever almost you find him begging prayers, he forgets not this, 2 Thes. iii. 1. *Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course.* Col. iv. 3. *Praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ.*

Admirable are the expressions whereby this holy man declares how deeply his heart was engaged in the work of the Lord, Rom. i. 9. He tells that his very soul and spirit was set upon it: *Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son;* never did any more long for preferment in the church, than to preach the gospel to the church, ver. 11. *I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.* He professeth himself a debtor to all sorts of men; he hath a heart and tongue to preach to all that have an ear to hear. *I am a debtor both to the Greeks,*

Greeks, and to the Barbarians; to the wise and to the unwise, ver. 14. Yea, he was ready to preach the gospel at Rome itself, ver. 15. where he should stand in the mouth of death and danger; this so took up his thoughts, that for it he threw all his worldly concernments at his heels; as for the world's riches, he professeth he progged not for it; *I seek not yours, but you*, 2 Cor. xii. 14. He had a nobler merchandize in his eye, he had rather preach them into Christ, than their money into his purse: And for their respect and love, though it was due debt to him, yet he lays it aside, and on he will go with his work, though they give him no thanks for his pains. *I will very gladly spend, and be spent; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.* His duty he will do to them, and leaves them to look to theirs to him: The nurse draws forth her breast to the child, though froward, because she looks for her reward not from the child, but its parent; God will reward the faithful minister, tho' his people will not thank him for his labour.

In a word, his very life was not valued by him, when it stood in competition with his work: Acts xx. 24. *But none of these move me, neither count I my life dear, that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus:* And not without great reason is it, that ministers should prefer their duty above all temporal respects; they are servants to God, and a servant must look to his work, whatever becomes of himself. Abraham's servant would not eat till he had done his message; and when it sped, neither would he stay then to lose time, but posts again with all expedition to his master, Gen. xxiv. 33. He said well, who was employed to relieve the city of Rome with corn; when the master of the ship would have had him stay for fair weather, answered, It is necessary that we sail, not that we live: It is necessary the minister should fulfil his ministry, not that he should be rich, not that he should be in reputation; the incomparable value of souls is such, as should make us hazard our whole temporal stake to promote their eternal salvation: He that wins souls is wise, though he lose his own life in the work.

SECT. II.—But we come to a more particular enquiry into these words, what the apostle means by *utterance*, which he desires may be given him. A parallel place to this we have, Col. vi. 3, 4.

Three things we may conceive the apostle drives at in this his request.

First, By utterance may be meant liberty to preach the gospel; that his mouth might not be stopped by the persecutor, who had him already his prisoner: Now he desires they would pray for him, that he might not be quite taken off his work.

Note 1.

Note 1. Where first observe, What a grievous affliction it is to a faithful minister to be denied liberty to preach the gospel.

So long as Paul might preach, though in a chain, he is not much troubled, the word is free, though he be bound; but to have his mouth stopped, to see poor souls ready to perish for want of that bread which he hath to give out, and yet may not be allowed this liberty, goes to his heart. *O pray,* saith he, *that utterance may be given*: If he may not preach, neither would he live; for upon this account alone he desired life, the furtherance of their faith, Phil. i. 25. O how far are they from Paul's mind, to whom it is more tedious to preach, than grievous to be kept from the work! How seldom should we see some in the pulpit, were it not a necessary expedient to bring in their revenue at the year's end?

SECT. III.—Note, Secondly, The liberty of the gospel, and of the ministers to deliver it, are in an especial manner to be prayed for.

First, Because this is strongly opposed and maligned by satan and his instruments.

Wherever God opens a door for his gospel, there satan raiseth his batteries: 1 Cor. xvi. 9. *A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.* No sooner doth God open his shop-windows, but the devil he is at work to shut them again, or hinder the free trade of his gospel: Other men's servants can work peaceably in their master's shop, but as for God's servants, every one hath a stone to throw in at them, as they pass by; when Paul began to preach at Thessalonica, the city was presently in an uproar and cry, *These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also,* Acts xvi. 6. Indeed they said true—let the gospel have but liberty, and it will turn the world upside down, it will make a change, but a happy one; this the devil knows, and therefore dreads its approach.

Secondly, Because it is the choicest mercy that God can bless a nation with.

Happy are the people that are in such a case; it is the gospel of the kingdom, it lifts a people up to heaven; we could better spare the sun out of its orb, than the preaching of the gospel out of the church. Souls might find the way to heaven, though the sun did not lend them its light; but without the light of truth, they cannot take one right step towards it: *Work* (saith Christ) *while ye have the light,* John xii. 36. Salvation-work cannot be done by the candle-light of a natural understanding, but by the day-light of gospel-revelation; this sun must rise, before man can go forth to this labour.

Thirdly, It is in God's power to preserve the liberty of his gospel and messengers, in spite of the devil and his instruments.

Therefore

Therefore indeed Paul sends them not to court to beg his liberty, but to heaven: God had Nero closer prisoner than he had Paul: Rev. iii. 8. *Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.* At Ephesus were many adversaries, we have heard, yet the door was kept open; Christ carries the keys of the church-door at his girdle, Rev. iii. 7. *He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth;* the key of the house of David, so Isa. xxii. 22. The church is Christ's house, and the master sure will keep the key of his own door.

Fourthly, Prayer hath a mighty power with God to preserve or restore liberty to his gospel and messengers.

It hath fetched home his servants from banishment, it hath brought them out of their dungeon; the prison could not hold Peter, when the church was at prayer for him. It hath had a mighty influence into the church's affairs, when at the lowest ebb; it was a sad world to the church in Nero's time, when Paul set the saints a-praying for kings, and those that were in authority; which prayers, though they were not answered in Nero, yet I doubt not but afterwards they were in Constantine, and other Christian princes, under whose royal wing the church of Christ was cherished and protected.

Fifthly, and lastly, Pray for their liberty, because when the gospel goes away, it goes not alone, but carries away your other mercies along with it.

The hangings are taken down when the prince removes his court; where the minister hath not liberty to preach the truth, the people will not long have liberty to profess it. When it went ill with James the apostle, it went not well with the church at Jerusalem, Acts xii. 1, 2. Nor can that place look long to enjoy its outward peace; when God removes his gospel, it is to make way for worse company to come, even all his sore plagues and judgments, Jer. vi. 8.

SECT. IV.—Secondly, When the apostle desires utterance to be given him, he may mean, that he may have a word given him to preach; according to that which Christ promiseth, Mat. x. 19. *It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.* From which we may note,

First, That ministers have no ability of their own for their work.

O how long may they sit tumbling their books over, and beating their brains, till God comes to their help! and then (as Jacob's venison) it is brought to their hand. If God drop not down his assistance, we write with a pen that hath no ink; if any in the world need walk pendently upon God more than others, the minister is he.

Secondly,

Secondly, Observe, that those who are most eminent for gifts and grace, have meanest thoughts of themselves, and are acquainted most with their own insufficiency.

Paul himself is not ashamed to let Christians know, that if God brings it not into him, he cannot deal out to them; he cannot speak a word to them, till he receives it from God, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who hath also made us able ministers of the new testament;* he is the able minister whom God enables.

Thirdly, Observe, the meanest Christian may, by his faithful prayers, help to make the minister's sermon for him.

Pray, saith the apostle, *that utterance may be given me;* that I may have from God what I should deliver to others: O what an useful instrument is a praying Christian! he may not only help his own minister, but others, even all the world over. Paul was now at Rome, and sends for prayers as far as to the saints at Ephesus.

SECT. V.—Thirdly, By utterance he may mean a faculty of speech, a readiness and facility to deliver to others what he hath been enabled to conceive in his own mind of the will of God; many eminent servants of God have been very sensible of, and much discouraged for, their impedite speech, and hesitant delivery. Now this may proceed from a natural cause, or supernatural.

First, From a natural cause; as,

1. From a defect in the instruments of speech, which some think was the cause of Moses' complaint, Exod. iv. 10. *I am not eloquent, but slow of speech:* And this discouraged him from being sent on God's errand; but God can compensate the hesitancy of the tongue with the divine power of the matter delivered; this Moses, who was so *slow in speech*, yet *was mighty in words*, Acts vii. 22. able to make Pharaoh's stout heart to tremble, though he might stammer in the delivery of it; God promised indeed to be with his mouth, yet it is probable he did not cure his natural infirmity; for we find him complaining afterwards of it: Such natural imperfections therefore should neither discourage the minister, nor prejudice the people; but rather make him more careful, that the matter be weighty he delivers; and them, and their attention, be more close and united.

2. From a weak memory; he that reads in a bad print, where many letters are defaced, cannot read fast and smooth, but will oft be stopt to study what is next. Memory is an inward table or book, out of which the minister reads his sermon unseen; if the notions or meditations we have to deliver, be not fairly imprinted on our memory, no wonder that the tongue is oft at a stand,

stand, except we should speak to no purpose; if the hopper be stopped, the mill cannot grind; or if the pipe that feeds the cistern be obstructed, it will be seen at the cock; when God hath assisted in the study, we need him to strengthen our memory in the pulpit.

3. From fear; if the heart faint, it is no wonder the tongue faulters; this, it is like, was at the bottom of Jeremiah's excuse, chap. i. 6. *Ah! Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child:* That is, I want the courage and spirit of a man to wrestle with those oppositions that will certainly meet me in the work; that this was his infirmity, appears by the method God takes for the cure, ver. 7, 8. *Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee: Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee.*

Secondly, Supernatural, where none of these defects are, but the minister stands best furnished, and in greatest readiness for his work; yet let but God turn the cock, and there is a stop put to the whole work; not only *the preparation of the heart, but the answer of the tongue, both are of the Lord,* Prov. xvi. 1. God keeps the key of the mouth as well as of the heart; not a word can get out, but sticks in the teeth, while God opens the door of the lips to give it a free egress. He opened the mouth of the ass, and stopped the mouth of that wicked prophet its master, Numb. xxii.; hear him confessing as much to Balak, ver. 38. *Lo, I am come unto thee; have I now any power at all to say any thing? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.* Never man desired more to be speaking than he, that which should have got him his hire, the wages of unrighteousness, for he loved it dearly: but God hath tongue-tied him; nay, even holy men, when they would speak the truth, and that for God, cannot deliver themselves, of what they have conceived in their inward meditations; hence David's prayer, *Open my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* God tells Ezekiel, he would *make his tongue cleave to his mouth*; he should not reprove them, though he would, chap. iii. 26.

SECT. VI.—*Use* 1. Do ministers depend thus on God for utterance?

This speaks to you my brethren in the Lord's work, do nothing for which God may stop your mouths when you come into the pulpit.

1. Take heed of any sin smothering in your bosoms.

Canst thou believe God will assist thee in his work, who canst lend thy hand to the devil's? mayest thou not rather fear he should hang a padlock on thy lips, and strike thee dumb, when thou goest about thy work? You remember the story of Origen, how after his great fall he was silenced in the very pulpit; for

for, at the reading of that, Psal. l. 16. *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?* the consciousness of his sin would not suffer him to speak. O it is sad, when the preacher meets his own sin in his subject, and pronounceth sentence against himself while he reads his text; if thou wouldst have God assist thee, be zealous, and repent; when the trumpet is washed, then the holy spirit (thou mayest hope) will again breathe through it.

Secondly, Beware thou comest not in the confidence of thy own preparations.

God hath declared himself against this kind of pride, 1 Sam. ii. 9. *By strength shall no man prevail.* A little bread, with God's blessing, may make a meal for a multitude, and great provision may soon shrink to nothing, if God help not in the breaking of it: It is not thy sermon in thy head, or notes in thy book, will enable thee to preach, except God open thy mouth; acknowledge therefore God in all thy ways, and lean not to thy own understanding: the swelling of the heart, as well as of the wall, goes before a fall; did the Ephraimites take it so ill, that Gideon would steal a victory without calling them to his help? how much more may it provoke God, when thou goest to the pulpit, and passest by his door in the way, without calling for his assistance?

Use 2. Secondly, To the people, take heed you do not stop your ministers' mouths; this you may do,

1. By admiring their gifts, and applauding their persons, especially when this is accompanied with unthankfulness to God that gives them; when you applaud the man, but do not bless God for him.

Princes have an evil eye upon those subjects that are over-popular; God will not let his creature stand in his light, nor have his honour suffer by the reputation of his instrument; the mother likes not to see the child taken with the nurse, more than with herself. O how foolish are we, who cannot love, but we must doat; not honour, but we must adore also! He that would keep his posey fresh and sweet, must smell, and lay it down again; not hold it too long in his hand, or breathe too much upon it; this is the way soon to welter it. To overdo is the ready way to undo; many fair mercies are thus overlaid, and pressed to death by the excess of a fond affection, or when it is accompanied with detracting of others; the abilities of one are cried up, to cry down another: I am of Paul, and I of Apollos; thus the disciples of either advanced their preacher, to hold up a faction.

2. You may provoke God to withdraw his assistance, by expecting the benefit from man, and not from God.

As

As if it were nothing but to take up your cloak and bible, and you are sure to get good by such a one's ministry; this is like them in James, that say, *We will go into such a city, and get gain;* as if it were no more to hear with profit, than to go to the tap, and draw wine or beer in your own cellar. It is just thou shouldst find the vessel frozen, the minister, I mean, straitened, and his abilities bound up, because thou comest to him, as unto a God, who is but a poor instrument. O say not to him, give me grace, give me comfort, as Rachel asked children of her husband; but go to thy God for these, in thy attendance on man.

3. By rebelling against the light of truth that shines forth upon you in his ministry.

God sometimes stops the minister's mouth, because the people shut their hearts; why should the cock run, to have water spilt upon the ground? Christ himself did not many mighty works; *he could not*, saith Mark, *in his own country*, because of their unbelief: *Dei justitia non permittebat, ut sanctum canibus daretur*, saith Brugensis upon the place. It is just God should take away the ministry, or stop the minister's mouth, when they despise his counsel, and the word becomes a reproach to them. I am sure it is a sad damp to the minister's spirit, that preacheth long to a gainsaying people, and no good omen to them. The mother's milk goes away sometimes before the child's death: God binds up the spirit of his messengers in judgment, Ezek. iii. 26. *I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be a reprover to them, for they are a rebellious house.*

CHAP. IV.

Sheweth what a Mystery is, and in what Respects the Gospel is so.

3. THE third branch in the division of the words, presents us with the end why he desires their prayers for utterance to be granted him, expressed in these words, *That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel:* where there are these three observables.

1. The sublime nature of the *gospel*, it is a *mystery*.

2. Wherein lies the work of a gospel-minister, *To make known the mystery of the gospel.*

3. The manner how he is to perform this work, *That I may open my mouth boldly.*

First, of the first,

SECT. I.—Observe, The gospel is a mystery; the Greek word some derive from *myeo*, to teach any secret belonging to religion; others of *myo*, or *myzo*, to shut the mouth, because those that were initiated, or admitted to be present at the religious rites and mysteries of the heathens (who were called *mystia*) might not reveal them to those that were *amystoi*, or not initiated; therefore they had an image before the temple, holding his finger upon his mouth, to put them in mind, as they went in and out, of keeping secret what was done within. Indeed the mysteries in their idolatrous worship were so impure and filthy, that nothing but secresy could keep them from being abhorred and detested by the more sober part of mankind.

And it is not unworthy of our noting, what I find observed to my hand by a learned pen, That the Spirit of God should make choice of that word in the New Testament so often, to express the holy doctrine of truth and salvation contained in it, which was so vilely abused by those heathenish idolaters; surely it shews them to be over-scrupulous, that judge it unlawful any way to make use of those names or things which have been abused by heathens or idolaters. B. Sanderson on 1 Tim. iii. 16. But to return to the word *mystery*; it hath obtained in our usual speech to be applied to any secret, natural, civil, or religious, which lies out of the road of vulgar understandings: In scripture it is generally used for religious secrets; and is taken both in an evil sense, and in a good.

1. In an evil sense.

2 Thess. ii. 7. *The mystery of iniquity doth already work*; whereby is meant the secret rising of antichristian dominion, whereof some foundations were laid even in the apostle's days: Error is but a day younger than truth. When the gospel began first to be preached by Christ and his apostles, error presently put forth her hand to take it by the heel, and supplant it. The whole system of antichristianism is a mystery of policy and impiety: Mystery is writ upon the whore of Babylon's forehead, Rev. xvii. 2.; and Causabon tells us, the same word was writ upon the Pope's mitre; if so, it is well he would own his name; *My soul, enter not thou into their secrets.*

Secondly, In a good sense.

Sometimes for some particular branch of evangelical truth: Thus the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles, is called a mystery, Rom. xi. 25. The wonderful change of those that shall be upon earth at the end of the world, 1 Cor. xv. 51. The incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, 1 Tim. iii.

iii. 16. with others. Sometimes for the whole body of the gospel, as to the docrine of it, called a mystery of faith, 1 Tim. iii. 9. As to the purity of its precepts, and rules for a holy life, a mystery of godliness. As to the author, subject, and end of it, called the mystery of Christ, Eph. iii. 4. It was revealed by him, treats of him, and leads souls to him: And lastly, in regard of the blessed reward it promiseth to all that sincerely embrace it, called the mystery of the kingdom of God, Mark iv. 11. This gospel is the glorious mystery we are now to speak of; and in the second place come to shew in what respect it is a mystery, or why so called by the spirit of God.

SECT. II.—First, Because it is known only by divine revelation.

Such a secret it is, that the wit of man could never have found out: There are many secrets in nature, which, with much plodding and study, have at last been discovered; as the medicinal virtue of plants, and the like; but the gospel is a secret, and contains in it such mysteries, as were *omni ingenio altiora*, as Calvin saith. What man or angel could have thought of such a way for reconciling God and man, as in the gospel is laid out? How impossible was it for them to have conjectured what purposes of love were locked up in the heart of God towards fallen man, till himself did open the cabinet of his own counsel? or had God given them some hint of a purpose he had for man's recovery, could they ever have so much as thought of such a way as the gospel brings to light? surely as none but God could lay the plot, so none but himself could make it known; the gospel therefore is called, *A revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began*, Rom. xvi. 25.

Secondly, Because the gospel, when revealed, its truths exceed the grasp of human understanding.

They are to the eye of our reason, as the sun is to the eye of our body; such a *nimium excellens*, that dazzles and overpowers the most piercing apprehension; they disdain to be discussed and tried by human reason, that there are three subsistencies in the Godhead, and but one divine essence; we believe, because they are revealed: But he that shall fly too near this light, as thinking to comprehend this mysterious truth in his narrow reason, will soon find himself lost in his bold enterprize. God and man united in Christ's person is undeniably demonstrable from the gospel; but, alas, the cordage of our understanding is too short to fathom this great deep: *Without controversy* (saith the apostle) *great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. It is a truth without controversy, it is confessed of all; yet such a mystery as is not fordable by our short-legged understanding; that there is no name but the name of Jesus, by

which we can be saved, is the grand notion of the gospel: But how many mysteries are wrapt up in one truth? who that should have seen the babe Jesus when he lay in the manger, and afterward meanly bred up under a carpenter, and at last executed for a malefactor, could have imagined (as one saith) that upon such weak hinges should move such a glorious design for man's salvation? But who dares think it unreasonable to believe that, upon God's report, to be true, which we cannot make out by our own understanding?

Some things we apprehend by reason, that cannot be known by sense; as that the sun is bigger than the earth; some things by sense, which cannot be found out by reason; that the loadstone attracts iron, and not gold, our eye beholds; but why it should, there our reason is dunced and posed: Now if in nature we question not the truth of these, though sense be at a loss in one, and reason in the other; shall we in religion doubt of that to be true, which drops from God's own mouth and pen, because it exceeds our weak understanding? Wouldst thou see a reason, saith Augustine, for all that God saith? look into thy own understanding, and thou wilt find a reason, why thou seest not a reason.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, It is a mytsery, in regard of the paucity of those to whom it is revealed.

Secrets are whispered into the ears of a few, and not exposed to all: *Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God*, Mark iv. 11. Who were those, *you?* but a few disciples who believed on his name; the greater part of the world were ever strangers to this mystery: Before Christ's time, it was impaled within a little spot of ground of the Jewish nation: since it came abroad into the Gentile world, and hath been travelling above sixteen hundred years hither and thither, how few at this day are acquainted with it! Indeed, where its glorious light shines long, many get a literal notional knowledge of it; it were strange that men should walk long in the sun, and not have their faces a little tanned with it; but the spiritual and saving knowledge of this mystery is revealed but to few; for the number of saints is not great, compared with the reprobate world.

Fourthly, In regard of the sort of men to whom it is chiefly imparted, such as are in reason most unlikely to dive into any great mysteries; those who are despised by the wise world, and the great states of it, as poor and base, 1 Cor. i. 26. *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty.*

If we have a secret to reveal, we do not choose weak and shallow heads to impart it unto; but here is a mystery which babes

babes understand, and wise men are ignorant of: *I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes:* The people, who were so scorned by the proud Pharisees, as those that knew not the law, John vii. 49. to them was the gospel revealed, while these doctors of the chair were left in ignorance; it is revealed to the poor many times, and hid from kings and princes; Christ passeth often by palaces, to visit the poor cottage. Herod could get nothing from Christ (who out of curiosity so long desired to see him), Luke xxiii. 8.; whereas the poor woman of Samaria, with a pitcher in her hand, Christ vouchsafeth her a sermon, and opens to her the saving truths of the gospel; Pilate missed of Christ on the bench, while the *poor thief* finds him, and heaven with him on the cross; devout women are passed by, and left to perish with their blind zeal, while harlots and publicans are converted by him.

SECT. IV.—Fifthly, A mystery in regard of the kind of knowledge the saints themselves have of it.

First, Their knowledge is but in part, and imperfect.

The most of what they know, is the least of what they do not know; the gospel is a rich piece of Arras, rolled up: this God hath been unfolding ever since the first promise was made to Adam, opening it still every age wider than other; but the world shall sooner be at an end, than this mystery will be fully known. Indeed as a river (which may be breaks forth at first from the small orifice of a little spring) does widen its channel, and grows broader, as it approacheth nearer to the sea; so the knowledge of this mystery doth spread every age more than other, and still will, as the world draws nearer to the sea of eternity, into which it must at last fall. The gospel appeared but a little spring in Adam's time, whose whole bible was bound up in a single promise; this increased to a rivulet by Abraham's time, and this rivulet enlarged itself into a river in the days of the prophets; but when Christ came in the flesh, then knowledge flowed in amain; the least in the gospel-state is said to be greater than the greatest before Christ: So that in comparison of the darker crimes of the law, the knowledge Christians now have, is great; but compared with the knowledge which they shall have in heaven, it is little, and but peep of day.

Secondly, It is mysterious and dark.

Gospel truths are not known in their native glory and beauty, but in shadows; we are said indeed *with open face to behold the glory of God*, but still it is *as in a glass;* now you know the glass presents us with the image, not with the face itself; we do not see them as indeed they are, but as our weak eyes can bear the knowledge of them; indeed this glass of the gospel is clearer

than that of the law was, we see truths through a thinner veil, baptism is clearer than circumcision, Lord's supper than passover; in a word, New Testament than old; yet there is nothing of heaven revealed in the gospel, but it is translated into our earthly language, because we are unable, while here below, to understand its original; who knows, or can conceive, what the joys of heaven are, so as to speak of them in their own idiom and propriety? but a feast we know; what a kingdom is, we understand; with riches and treasures we are well acquainted; now heaven is set out by those things, which in this world bear the greatest price in men's thoughts; in heaven is a feast, yet without meat; riches, without money; a kingdom, without robes, sceptre, and crown, because infinitely above these; hence it is said, *We know not what we shall be,* 1 John iii. Our apprehension of things are manly, compared with those under the law; but childish, compared with the knowledge which glorified saints have; therefore, 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11. as Paul saith, *He put away childish things*, when he grew up into further knowledge of the gospel; so tells us of an imperfect knowledge, which yet he had, *That must be done away, when that which is perfect is come.*

6. The gospel is a mystery, in regard of the contrary operation it hath upon the hearts of men.

The eyes of some it opens, others it blinds; and who so blind as those whose eyes are put out with light? Some, when they hear the gospel, are pricked in their hearts, they can hardly stay till the preacher hath done his sermon, but cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* others are hardened by it, and their consciences seared into a greater stupidity. At Paul's sermon, Acts xvii. *some mocked;* others were affected so with his discourse, that *they desired to hear it again;* what a mysterious doctrine is this, that sets one a-laughing, another a-weeping? That is the savour of life to some, and of death to others!

SECT. V.—Seventhly, and lastly, A mystery it is, in regard of those rare and strange effects it hath upon the godly, and that both in respect of their judgments and practice.

As the gospel is a mystery of faith, so it enables them to believe strange mysteries: to believe that which they understand not, and hope for that which they do not see; it enables them to believe Three to be One, and One to be Three; a Trinity of persons in the Deity, and an unity of Essence; a Father not older than his Son; a Son not inferior to his Father; a Holy Spirit proceeding from both; it teacheth them to believe that Christ was born in time, and that he was from everlasting; that he was comprehended within the Virgin's womb, and yet the heaven of heavens not able to contain him; to be the Son of Mary, and yet her maker, that was his mother; to be born without sin, and

and yet justly to have died for sin: they believe that God was just in punishing Christ, though innocent; and in justifying penitent believers, who are sinners, they believe themselves to be great sinners, and yet that God sees them in Christ without spot or wrinkle.

Again, As the gospel is a mystery of godliness, it enables them to do as strange things as they believe; to live by another's spirit, to act from another's strength, to live by another's will, and aim at another's glory: they live by the spirit of Christ, act with his strength, are determined by his will, and aim at his glory; it makes them so meek and gentle, that a child may lead them to any thing that is good; yet so stout, that fire and faggot shall not fright them into a sin; they can love their enemies, and yet for Christ's sake can hate father and mother; it makes them diligent in their worldly calling, yet enables them to contemn the riches they have got by God's blessing on their labour; they are taught by it, that all things are theirs, yet they dare not take a penny, a pin, from the wicked of the world by force and rapine; it makes them so humble, as to prefer every one in honour above themselves; yet so to value their own condition, that the poorest among them would not change his estate with the greatest monarch of the world; it makes them thank God for health, and for sickness also; to rejoice when exalted, and as much when made low; they can pray for life, and at the same time desire to die. Is not that doctrine a mystery, which fills the Christian's life with so many riddles?

CHAP. V.

The Reason why the Gospel is slighted and persecuted, as also why Carnal Men bungle so in Matters of Religion, shewn from the sublime Nature of Gospel Truths.

Use 1. THIS gives us a reason why the gospel, with the great offers it makes, is so slighted and rejected by the wicked world.

The cause is, the blessings of the gospel are a mystery, and offered in such a way, that carnal hearts skill not of them, and therefore care not for them; the things it propounds are such as like them well enough, might they have them in a way suited to their carnal apprehensions. The gospel offers riches and honours, who are not taken with these? The gospel opens a mine of unsearchable riches, but in a mystery: it shews them a way

how to be rich in faith, rich to God, rich for another world, while poor in this. Our Saviour went about to learn the young man in the gospel a way to be rich; not by purchasing more land, but by selling what he had, but he would not follow his counsel. The gospel offers pleasures and delights, and these the sensual world like well enough; but, alas, they please not their carnal coarse palate, because they are pleasures in a mystery, pleasures in mourning for sin, and mortifying of sin, not pleasures in satisfying them; pleasures in communion with Christ at an ordinance, not with a knot of good fellows over a pot at an ale-house; pleasures to the eye and palate of faith, not of sense; to feed their souls, not pamper and fat their bellies.

In a word, the gospel makes a discovery of high and choice notions; surely now those, who are the more sober part of the world, bookish men, and in love with good literature, whose souls crave intellectual food, and prize a lecture more than a feast, these will be highly pleased with the truths the gospel brings to light, being such rare mysteries that they can find in no other book; yet, alas! we see that the gospel doth as little please this rank and sort of men, as any other. Had it been filled with flowers of rhetoric, chemical experiments, philosophical notions, or maxims of policy, O how greedily would they have embraced it? but it is wisdom in a mystery, 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7. *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought.*— Bradwardine, a great scholar, before he was meekened by the grace of the gospel, slighted Paul's epistles (as afterward he confessed), because he did not express *ingenium metaphisicum*, a metaphysical head in his discourses.

Secondly, It shews us the reason why the gospel and its professors are not only slighted, but hated and persecuted.

1. For the gospel, it is a mystery which the world knows not, and therefore opposed by it.

Ignorance is the mother of persecution: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do:* The greatest enemies the gospel ever had, were not the sensual, and open profane (though these bad enough), but the superstitious and ignorantly devout; these have been they who have shewn most fury and fierceness against the gospel; Paul tells us of the devout persons that cruelly persecuted him, Acts xiii. 15. None more hot against the truth than Paul himself, who was a strict Pharisee, but a bloody enemy against the truth; what reason then have we to pray for the increase of gospel-light! the more the gospel is known, the more kindly will it be entertained.

Again, The professors of the gospel, why they are so hated and

and maligned, but because they partake of the mysterious nature of the gospel, and therefore their worth is not known?

They are high-born, but in a mystery, you cannot see their birth by their outward breeding, arms they bear, revenues they have to live on, by which the world judges the greatness of persons and families: No, their outside is mean, while their inside is glorious; and the world values them by what they see and know of their external part, and not by their inward graces; they pass as a prince in a disguise of some poor man's clothes through the world, and their entertainment is accordingly.

Had Christ put on his robes of glory and majesty when he came into the world, surely he had not gone out of it with so shameful and cruel a death; the world would have trembled at his footstool, which we see some of them did, when but a beam of his deity looked forth upon them. Did the saints walk on earth in those robes which they shall wear in heaven, then they would be feared and admired by those who now scorn and despise them: But as God should not have had his design in Christ's first coming, had he so appeared, so neither would he in his saints, did the world know them, as one day they shall; therefore he is pleased to let them lie hid under the mean coverings of poverty, and other infirmities, that so he may exercise their suffering graces, and also accomplish his wrath upon the wicked for theirs against him.

3. The gospel is a mystery.

This shews us the reason why carnal men do so bungle, when they meddle with matters of religion; let them but speak of gospel truths, what ignorance do they shew? Even as a country-man chops logic, and speaks of the liberal arts, so they of heavenly matters: Do we not see that those who in worldly affairs will give you a wise and solid answer, in the truths of the gospel they speak like children and babes? yea, even those that have some brain-knowledge of the scriptures, how dry and unsavoury is their discourse of spiritual things? they are like a parable in a fool's mouth; so when they engage in any duty of religion, put them to pray, hear the word, meditate upon what they have heard, you may as good give a workman's tools to him that was never at the trade; they know not how to handle them, they go ungainsomely about the work, and cut all into chips; every trade hath its mystery, and religion above all other callings, which none but those that are instructed in it, know how to manage.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Several Duties pressed upon Saints, from the Mysterious Nature of the Gospel.

Use 2. FOR exhortation, to two sorts.

First, To the saints, who are instructed in this mystery.

SECT. I.—First, Be thankful that ever God revealed it to thee.

O what a mercy is this, that thou hast light and immortality brought to light, that thy ears hear this joyful sound! Never came such joyful news to town, as the gospel brings; what a poor nation was this of ours before the gospel-day broke among us? Bless God thy lot is cast where the sun is up: The gospel was indeed early preached in the world, Adam had it soon after his fall; but a short gospel, a mystery indeed to him, wrapped all up in one promise, and that a dark one; but now that one wedge of gold is beaten out into the whole bible, a gospel, writ at length, and not in figures; you hear the gospel, not preached in law-terms, as the Jews did under Moses' pedagogy, but gospel in gospel-language; the veil is taken off, which hid the beauty of gospel-truths from their face; you hear it after it hath been rescued out of antichrist's hands, by whom for many ages it was kept prisoner; you live not in those dark times, when gospel-truths were embased with the mean alloy of school-men's subtilties, and superstitious vanities, when more stones were given to break the teeth, than bread to feed the souls of people.

The conduit of the gospel now runs with wine, not twice or thrice a-year, on some gaudy festival day, but constantly, every Sabbath-day, you have your fill of its sweetest truths; were it not sad, if they should be found to be a little more thankful for the little dawning of gospel-light, which then but peeped forth, than you for its meridian light, who live to see the sun of righteousness with his healing wings spread forth upon you? But especially bless God for any inward light and life thou hast received from this gospel. God hath done more for thee in this, than for thousands thou livest among, and those no mean ones neither: to this day God hath not given thy carnal neighbours eyes to see, nor hearts to perceive that mystery which is unfolded unto thee: Are you thankful to him that hath taught your worldly trade, by which you pick up a small livelihood for your body? O what praise then dost thou owe to thy God, who, by instructing thee in this mystery, hath learnt thee an art for saving of thy soul?

Trumpeters

Trumpeters delight to sound where they have the best echo; God delights to give his mercy to those that will most resound his praise.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The gospel is a mystery, therefore rest not in thy present attainments, either in thy knowledge, as it is a mystery of faith, or thy practice, as it is a mystery of godliness.

1. Rest not in thy present knowledge.

It is like thou knowest much to what once thou didst, but thou knowest little to what thou mayest; some books are learnt at once reading, but the gospel is a mystery that will take up more than thy life-time to understand it. Mysteries are here sown thick—thou diggest where the spring rises faster upon thee, the further thou goest; God tells not all his secrets at once, *here a little, and there a little; man shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*, Dan. xii. 4. The merchant's ship takes not all her lading at one port, but sails from one to another for it; neither doth the Christian enrich himself with this heavenly treasure all at one time, or in one ordinance; the true lover of learning gives not over his chase and pursuit for a little smattering knowledge he gets, but rather, having got the scent how sweet learning is, puts on with fuller cry for what he wants: The true doctor studies harder than the fresh-man, because, as he knows more of learning, so by that knowledge he understands his own deficiency better; for the higher he ascends the hill of learning, the more his prospect enlargeth, while the other, standing at the bottom, thinks he knows all in his little.

Secondly, In thy practice, as it is a mystery of godliness; let not a little grace serve thy turn, when thou mayest have more: Which, that you may do,

1. Compare not thyself with those that have less than thyself, but look on those that have far exceeded thee; to look on our inferiors occasions pride. *I am not as this Publican*, saith the Pharisee; but looking on others more eminent than ourselves, will both preserve humility, and be a spur to diligence: Miltiades his victories would not suffer Themistocles, then a young man, to sleep; the progress that some have made in grace, didst thou but keep them in thine eye, would not suffer thee to be quiet, who art now lagging so far behind, till thou hast overtaken them: May be thou hast got some victory over thy passion, and art not such a bedlam in thy fury as others but didst thou never hear how meek a man Moses was, that could bear the murmurings of the multitude, yea, envy of his brother and sister, and yet his heart not take fire? Thou hast some good affections towards God, but how far short of holy David's zeal, whose heart did run out to God, as soon as his eyes were open in the morning? *When I awake*

awake, I am still with thee; thrice a-day, yea, seven times a-day, he would praise his God. Thou hast some patience, but hast thou learnt to write after Job's copy? thou art not without faith, but art thou like Abraham, strong in faith to follow God, when thou knowest not whither he will lead thee?

Secondly, The grace thou hast will soon be less, if thou addest not more to it; thou art upon a swift stream, let thy oar miss its stroke, and thou fallest backward; there is no such a thing in religion, as a saving trade of godliness: Some men in their worldly trade can say, at the year's end, they have neither got nor lost; but thou canst not say thus at the day's end, thou art at night better or worse than thou wert in the morning.

Thirdly, It is the design of the gospel to give grace in great measures: Christ gives life, *and that more abundantly*, John x. 10. Now shall the fountain be so large, and the pitcher we carry to it so little? Wherefore doth God open his hand to such a breadth in the promise, but to widen our desires, and encourage our endeavours?

Fourthly, The more grace thou hast got, the easier it will be to add to it; a little learning is got with more difficulty by a young scholar, than a great deal more afterwards.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Bear with one another's imperfections. You see the gospel is a mystery, do not wonder therefore that any are not presently masters of their art; Christ bears with the saints' imperfections, well may the saints one with another; how raw were the disciples in their knowledge? how long did they stand at one lesson, before they could learn it? *Do you now believe?* says Christ, John xvi. 31. He had borne with them long, and inculcated the same thing often, before it entered their minds; yet, alas, we can hardly have a good opinion of, or hold communion with, those that are not every way of our judgment, and cannot see things so clear as ourselves; surely we mistake the nature of the gospel, as if there were none but plain points in it; blessed be God, as to principles necessary to salvation, though their nature be high and mysterious, yet they are clearly and plainly asserted in the word: *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness*, 2 Tim. iii. ult. Godliness is a mystery, but it is without controversy, as to the main fundamental points and practices of it, there is no dispute among the faithful; but there are some points more remote from the vital parts of religion, that have knots not easily untied, which makes some difference of judgment; but it is not every excess or defect makes a monster, as six or four fingers on the hand, but an excess or defect in some principal part; neither doth every mistake make a monster in religion: Remember that the gospel is a mystery, and you will bear with one another's ignorance the better; and when

when love hath once laid the dust which passion and prejudice hath blown in our eyes, we shall then stand at greater advantage for finding out truth.

Again bear with weakness in the practical part of religion.

Godliness, as well as the doctrine of our faith, is a mystery; all the servants in a shop cannot work alike; some bungle at it more than others (as their parts and experience are less), all saints are not of a height; Christ hath some children in his family that are led with strings, as well as others that go strongly without such help; some act more upon pure gospel-principles (love, and a spirit of adoption), others have not yet worn off their legal fears and terrors; some are got higher up the hill of faith, and have clearer apprehensions of their spiritual state; others are nearer the bottom, who (as the sun newly risen above the horizon) are wrapt up with many clouds of perplexing fears and doubts: In a word, some are got further out of their passions, have greater mastery over their corruptions, than other of their brethren; pity thy weak brother, and take him by the hand for his help, but despise him not, *God can make even him stand*, and suffer thee to fall; Christ doth not quench the smoaking flax, why should we? The weak Christian is welcome to his heavenly Father, as well as the strong, why should he not be so to his brethren? But, alas! the proverb is here too true, *Better speak to the master, than the man; the father, than the child:* Those that can be so bold with God, dare not be free with their fellow-servants and brethren.

SECT. IV. Fourthly, Is the gospel a mystery? then, Christian, long for heaven; there, and only there, shall this mystery be fully known.

The great things which were spoken concerning the gospel-church made many saints and prophets, before Christ's time, desire to see those happy times wherein such revelations should be made; how much more should we long for heaven, where this great mystery shall be fully opened, and every box of this cabinet unlocked, in which lie so many precious jewels to this day unseen by any saint on earth! Then it will be said, *The mystery of God is finished*, Rev. x. 7.

Here we learn our knowledge of it by little and little, like one that reads a book as it comes from the press, sheet by sheet; there we shall see it altogether: here we get a little from this sermon, a little more from the next, and thus our stock increases by the addition of a few pence thrown in, some to-day, and more to-morrow; but there we shall have all at once: here we learn with much pain and difficulty, there without travail and trouble: glorified saints, though they cease not from work, yet rest from labour: here passion blinds our minds, that we mistake error for truth,

truth, and truth for error; but then these clouds shall be scattered and gone: Here the weakness of natural parts keeps many in the dark, and renders them incapable of apprehending some truths, which other of their brethren are led into; but there the strong shall not prevent the weak, the scholar shall know as much as his master, the people as their minister.

Here the squabbles and contentions among the godly, do leave the weaker sort at great uncertainty what to think concerning many truths; but there they shall all agree, which comforted that holy man on his death-bed, that he was going thither, where Luther and Calvin were reconciled: here we are disturbed in our enquiries after truth; one while the necessary occasions of this world divert us, another while the weakness and infirmities of our bodies hinder us; but in heaven our bodies will call for none of this tending, we shall need provide neither raiment for the back, nor food for the belly.

O happy death, that will ease us of all the aches of our bodies, and conflicts in our souls! Thou art the only physician to cure all the saints' distempers in both; when that blessed hour comes, then lift up your heads with joy, for it will lead you into that blissful place where you shall see Christ, not a great way off, not with the eye of faith in the optic glass of an ordinance or promise, but with a glorified eye behold his very person, never more to lose the sight of him: thou shalt not taste his love in a little morsel of sacramental bread, and sip of wine, but lay thy mouth to the fountain, and from his bosom drink thy full draught. Thou shalt no more hear what a glorious place heaven is, as thou wert wont to have it set forth by the sorry rhetoric of a mortal man, preaching to thee of that with which himself was but little acquainted: but shalt walk thyself in the streets of that glorious city, and bless thyself when thou art there, to think what poor low thoughts thou and thy minister also had thereof, when on earth thou didst meditate, and he did preach on this subject; one moment's sight of that glory will inform thee more, than all the comments and books writ of it, were ever able to do; and dost thou not yet cry out, How long will it be, O Lord, most holy and true, before thou bringest me thither? Is not every hour a day, day a month, month a year, yea age, till that time comes? As Bernard upon those words, John xvi. 16. *A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while, and ye shall see me*, passionately breaks forth, *Pie Domine, modicum illud vocas, in quo te non videam? O modicum, modicum longum!* Holy Lord, dost thou call that a little while in which I shall not see thee? O this little, is a long little while.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

An Exhortation to study this Mystery of the Gospel, with some Directions thereunto given.

2. BE you provoked, who are yet strangers to this mystery, to get the knowledge of it; yea, endeavour to gain an intimate acquaintance with it: To move you thereunto, I shall make use only of these two arguments.

SECT. I.—First, Consider the author of this mystery.

Secondly, The subject matter of it.

First, The author of it.

That book must needs be worth the reading, which hath God for the author; that mystery deserves our knowledge, which is the product of his infinite wisdom and love; there is a divine glory sitting upon the face of all God's works; it is impossible so excellent an artist should put his hand to an ignoble work, Psal. civ. 24. *How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all.* But there is not the same glory to be seen in all his works. Our apostle tells us, *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, one star differs from another in glory.*

Now, among all the works of God, that of man's redemption may well pass for the master-piece; the world itself was set up to be a stage for the acting of this piece of providence, wherein the manifold wisdom of God is so curiously wrought, that angels themselves pry into it, and are wrapped up into an admiration of it, Eph. iii. 10. 1 Pet. i. 12. God's works deserve our study, and those most wherein he hath drawn the clearest portraiture of himself. The gospel-mystery, therefore, above all other, should be searched into by us, being the only glass in which the glory of God is with open face to be seen.

Secondly, Consider the subject matter of the gospel; Christ and the way of salvation through him.

What poor and low ends have all worldly mysteries; one to make us rich, another to make us great and honourable in the world, but none to make us holy here, or happy hereafter; this is learned only from the knowledge of Christ, who is revealed in the gospel, and nowhere else. No doubt Solomon's natural history, in which he treated *of all trees, from the cedar to the hyssop, of all beasts, fowls, and creeping things*, was a rare piece in its kind; yet one leaf of the gospel is infinitely more worth to us, than all that large volume would have been; so much more precious, by how much that knowledge of God in Christ was better than

than the knowledge of beasts and birds. And we have reason to think it a mercy that the book is lost and laid out of our sight, which we should have been prone to have studied more than the bible; not that it was better, but more suitable to the mould of our carnal minds. But to a gracious soul, enlightened with saving knowledge, no book like this of the bible.

Paul was a bred scholar, he wanted not that learning which commends men to the world, yet counts all dung and dogs' meat in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord, Phil. iii. 8. Well might he call it dogs' meat; for a man may feed all his life-time on human learning, and die (in scripture sense) a dog at last. It was the saying of Bonaventure, that he had rather lose all his philosophy, than one article of his faith. We read that those, Acts ix. were no sooner converted, than they burnt their books of curious arts; neither were they losers by it, for they had got acquainted with one book that was worth them all. Of all creatures in this visible world, light is the most glorious: of all light, the light of the sun, without compare, excells the rest. Were this eye of the world put out, the earth would be in a grot, a grave, in which we should be buried alive. What were the Egyptians while under the plague of darkness, but like so many dead men? they had friends, but could not see them; estates abroad in the fields, but could not enjoy them.

Now, what the sun is to the visible world, that is Christ in the gospel to the intellectual world of souls: without this light of knowledge of God in the face of Christ, what can the soul do or enjoy aright? man's soul is of high, yea, royal extraction; for God is the father of spirits, but this child meets his heavenly father in the dark, and knows him not: *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*, John i. 10. And as it is of high birth, so intended for a high end, to glorify and enjoy God, its maker. Now, for want of the knowledge of Christ, it can do neither; but debaseth itself to the drudgery of sin, and sensual embraces of the creature, instead of God, for whom it was at first made; like the son of some great prince, who, not knowing his royal descent, casts himself away in marriage on some beggar's daughter.

O how should we prize and study this mystery therefore, that brings us to the true knowledge of God, and the way how we may recover our interest in him, and happiness with him! Man's primitive happiness consisted in God's love to him, and his likeness to God. The gospel discovers a way how man may be restored to both. The first it doth, as it is a mystery of faith, by revealing Christ and his atonement for our reconciliation with God. The latter, as it is a mystery of godliness, and the instrument which Christ useth in the hand of his spirit to create man anew,

anew, and, as it were, the tool to re-ingrave the image of God upon him with.

SECT. II.—But how may we be led into the saving knowledge of this mystery?

1. Think not to obtain it by the strength of thy reason or natural parts.

It is not learned as other secrets in nature or human arts, of which those that have the most piercing wit and strongest brain, soonest get the mastery. None have been more mistaken, or erred more foully in their apprehensions about gospel-truths, than the greatest scholars, sons of reason, and men admired for their parts and learning; the cause whereof may be partly their pride and self-confidence, which God ever was, and will be an enemy to; and also because the mysteries of the gospel do not suit and jump with the principles of carnal reason and wisdom, whence it comes to pass that the wiser part of the world (as they are counted) have commonly rejected the grand principles of evangelical faith, as absurd and irrational.

Tell a wise Arian, that Christ is God and man in one person, and he laughs at it, as they did at Paul, when he mentioned the resurrection of the body, Acts xvii. 32. because the key of his understanding fits not the wards of this lock; when a merit-monger hears of being justified by faith and not by works, it will not go down with him. It seems as ridiculous to him, that a man should be justified by the righteousness which another fulfils, as for a man to live by the meat another eats, and be warm with the clothes another wears; tell him, when he hath lived never so holily, he must renounce his own work, and be beholden to another's merit, you shall as soon persuade him to sell his estate, to get his living by begging at another's door. These are hard sayings, at which they take offence, and go away, or labour to pervert the simplicity of gospel-revelation to their own sense.

Resolve, therefore, to come (when thou readest the gospel) not to dispute with thy Maker, but to believe what he reveals to be his mind. Call not divine mysteries to give an account to thy shallow understanding; what is this but to try a prince at a subject's bar? When thou hast laid aside the pride of thy reason, then thou art fit to be admitted a scholar in Christ's school, and not till then.

Object. But must we cease to be men, when we become Christians?

Answ. No, we cease not to be men, but to be proud men, when we lay aside the confidence of our own understanding, to acquiesce in the wisdom and truth of God. An implicit faith is absurd and irrational, when a man requires it of us, who may deceive, or be deceived in what he saith. But when God speaks, it is all the

reason in the world, we should believe what he saith to be true, though we cannot comprehend what he saith; for we know he who is infinite wisdom cannot himself be deceived, and he who is truth and faithfulness will not deceive us.

SECT. III.—Secondly, Thou must become a disciple to Christ.

Men do not teach strangers that pass by their door, or that come into their shops, the mystery of their trade and profession; but their servants, and such as are willing to be bound apprentices to them: neither doth Christ promise to reveal the mysteries of the gospel to any, but those that will give up their names to be his servants and disciples; *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables,* Mark iv. 11.

When once thou hast subscribed to the covenant of the gospel, thy indenture is sealed; Christ is now thy master, he takes thee for one of his family and charge, and so will look to thy breeding and education; but for those on whose hearts and affections he hath no hold, they come, may be, to the ordinance, but when the sermon is done, return to their old master again; sin is still their trade, and satan their lord; is it like that Christ should teach them his trade? the mystery of iniquity and godliness are contrary—the one cannot be learned, till the other be unlearned.

3. If thou wouldst learn this mystery to any purpose, content not thyself with a brain-notional knowledge of it.

The gospel hath respect both to the head and heart, understanding and will: To the understanding, it is a mystery of faith: To the heart and life, it is a mystery of godliness. Now these two must not be severed: *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience,* 1 Tim. iii. 9. Here is both the *manna* and a *golden pot* to keep it in—truth laid up in a pure conscience. Knowledge may make thee a scholar, but not a saint; orthodox, but not gracious. What if thou wert able to write a commentary on all the bible, and from the scripture couldst confute all the errors and heresies which were at any time broached and vented against the truth, what would this avail thee, while thy own lusts confute, yea, confound thyself? *If I understand all mysteries, and have not charity, I am nothing,* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

He that increaseth knowledge, and doth not get grace with his knowledge, increaseth sorrow to himself, yea, eternal sorrow. It would be an ease to gospel-sinners in hell, if they could raze the remembrance of the gospel out of their memories, and forget that they ever knew such truths. In thy knowledge, therefore, of gospel-mysteries, labour for these two things especially.

1. To see thy propriety in them.

2. To feel the power and efficacy of them.

SECT.

SECT. IV.—1. Thy impropriety in them.

Herein lies the pith and marrow of gospel-knowledge. When thou findest what Christ hath done and suffered for poor sinners, rest not till thou canst say, with Paul, *Who loved me, and gave himself for me.* When thou readest any precious promise, thou shouldst ask thy soul, as the Eunuch, concerning that place in Isaiah, *Is it spoken to me, or of some other?* Am I the pardoned person? Am I the poor in spirit, to whom the kingdom of heaven is promised? Am I one in Christ Jesus, to whom there is no condemnation? How impatient were those two prisoners, till Joseph had opened their dream, that they might know what should befal them? The scripture will resolve you whether your head shall be lift up to the gibbet in hell, or the king's court in heaven.

Now, in reading or hearing it preached, this is it thou shouldst listen after, and enquire to know, where it lays thee out thy portion, whether in the promise, or in the threatening. There is a sweet feast the gospel speaks of, but am I one of Christ's guests that shall sit at it? There are mansions prepared in heaven, but can I find one taken up for me there?

2. Labour to find the power and efficacy of gospel-truths upon thee.

When our first parents had eaten that unhappy fruit, which gave them and all mankind in them their bane, it is said, then *they knew that they were naked;* doubtless they knew it, before their fall; but now they knew it with shame: they knew it, and sought clothes to cover them, of which they found no want before. I only allude to the place; many know what sin is, but it is not a soul-feeling knowledge; they know they are naked, but are not ashamed of their nakedness; they see no need of Christ's righteousness to cover it, and of his grace to cure it.

Many know Christ died, and for what he died; yet Christ's death is a dead truth to them: it doth not procure the death of their lusts, that were the death of him: They know he is risen, but they lie still themselves, rotting in the grave of their corruptions: They know Christ is ascended to heaven, but this draws not their souls after him. A philosopher, being asked what he had got by philosophy, answered, *It hath learned me to contemn what others adore, and to bear what others cannot endure.*

If one should ask, What have you got by knowing the mystery of the gospel? truly you can give no account worthy of your acquaintance with it, except you say, I have learned to believe what flesh and blood could never have taught me, and to do what I never could, till I had acquaintance with its heavenly truths.—This is to *know the truth as it is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21. Had a sick man drank some potion, which, if it works, will save his

life, if not will certainly be his death, O how troubled would he be, while he sees some operation it hath upon him? what means would he not use to set it a-work? If gospel-truths work not effectually on thee for thy renovation and sanctification, thou art a lost man; they will undoubtedly be a savour of death to thee. O how then can you rest till you find them transforming your hearts, and assimilating your lives to their heavenly nature? Thus Paul endeavoured to know the power of Christ's resurrection hereafter, Phil. iii. 10, 11. The gospel is a glass, but not like that in which we see our bodily face, this only shews what our feature is, and leaves it as it was, but that changeth the very complexion of the soul from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

CHAP. VIII.

Sheweth it to be the Minister's Duty to make known the Gospel, and why, with some Questions about it answered.

YOU have had the sublime nature of the gospel set forth; it is a mystery.

Now follows the second branch in the words, what the minister's duty is in reference to the gospel; and that is to promulge and publish this mystery to the sons of men; in these words, *To make known the mystery of the gospel.* Here the minister's work is laid out; he is with all possible clearness and perspicuity to open this mystery, and expose it to the view of the people.—Mark, the gospel is his subject, and to make it known his duty; so runs the ministers commisssion for his office, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature,* Mark xvi. 15. We hear people sometime saying, The preacher is besides his text; but he is never besides his errand, so long as it is the gospel he makes known. Whatever is his text, this is to be his design. His commission is to make known the gospel; to deliver that therefore which is not reductive to this, is besides his instructions. Nothing but the preaching of the gospel can reach the end for which the gospel-ministry was appointed, and that is the salvation of souls, 1 Cor. i. 21. *After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* The great book of the creation had lain long enough open before the world's eyes, yet could they never come to the saving knowledge of God, by all that divine wisdom which is writ with the finger of God in every page thereof. Therefore it pleased God to send his servants,

vants, that by preaching the gospel, poor souls might believe on Christ, and believing might be saved. No doctrine but the gospel can save a soul; nor the gospel itself, except it be made known.

SECT. I.—First, No doctrine but the gospel can save a soul.

Galen may learn you to save your health, if you will follow his rules; Lyttleton and other law-books will teach you how to save your estates; Plato and other philosophers will learn you how to save your credits among men, by an outward just inoffensive life. Their doctrine will be a means to save you from many nasty and gross sins, by which you may be applauded by your neighbours on earth, and perhaps less tormented in hell, where Fabricius finds a cooler place than Cataline; but it is the gospel alone whereby you can be taught how to save your souls from hell, and bring them to heaven. But what do I speak of these? It is not God's own law (the moral I mean) that is now able to save you. God would never have been at such a vast expence (in the bloodshed of his Son) to erect another law, viz. the law of faith, if that would have served for this purpose, Gal. ii. 21. *For if righteousness come* (yea, or could come) *by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Quest. *Why then do ministers preach the Law?*

Answ. If they preach it as they should, they preach in subserviency to the gospel, not in opposition.

Qui scit bene distinguere inter Legem & Evangelium, Deo gratias agat, & scit se esse Theologum. He that knows how to distinguish well between the law and the gospel, let him bless God, and know that he then deserves the name of a Divine. We must preach it as a rule, not as a covenant of life. Holiness, as to the matter and substance of it, is the same that ever it was.—The gospel destroys not the law in this sense, but adds a strong enforcement to all its commands.

Again, We may and must preach the law as the necessary means to drive souls out of themselves to Christ in the gospel. The gospel is the net with which we should catch souls, and draw them out of their sinning sinking state. But how shall we get them to come into it? Truly never, except we first beat the river with the law's clubs (threatenings I mean.) Sinners lie in their lusts, as fish in the mud, out of which there is no getting them, but by laying hard upon their consciences with the threatenings of the law, Rom. v. 20. *Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound;* that is, in the conscience by conviction, not in life by commission and practice. The law shews both what is sin, and also what sin is; I mean, it tells when we commit a sin, and what a hateful and dangerous thing we do in committing

mitting of it; how we alarm God, and bring him with all his strength into the field against us.

Now this is necessary to prepare a way for the sinners entertaining the gospel. The needle must enter before the thread, with which the cloth is sewed. The sharp point of the law must prick the conscience, before the creature can by the promises of the gospel be drawn to Christ. The field is not fit for the seed to be cast into it, till the plough hath broken it up; nor is the soul prepared to receive the mercy of the gospel, till broken with the terrors of the law.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The gospel itself saves not except it be made known.

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, 2 Cor. iv. 3. Where God sends no light, he intends no love. In bodily sickness, a physician may make a cure, though his patient knows not what the medicine is that he useth; but the soul must know its remedy, before he can have any healing benefit from it. In Luke i. 77. John is sent to give knowledge of salvation for the remission of their sins. No knowledge, no remission. Christ must be lift up on the pole of the gospel, as well as on the tree of the cross, that by an eye of faith we may look on him, and so be healed, John iii. 4. *Look unto me, and be ye saved*, Isa. xlv. 22. A man that sees, may lead another that is bodily blind to the place he would go; but he that would go to heaven, must have an eye in his own head to see his way, or else he will never come there.

The just shall live by his faith, Hab. ii. 4. not by another's: a proxy faith is bootless. Now saving faith is a grace that sees her object; it is the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. that is, which are not seen by sense. *I know* (saith Paul) *whom I have believed*, 2 Tim. i. 12. Therefore faith is oft set out by knowledge; *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, John xvii. 3. Now how can they know Christ and life eternal, till the gospel be made known, which bringeth him and life by him to light? 2 Tim. i. 10. And by whom shall the gospel be made known, if not by the ministers of it? Thus far the apostle drives it, Rom. ix. 14. *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?* So that this great work lies at the minister's door; he is to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Object. But what need now of preaching? this was the work of those that were to plant a church; now the church is planted, and the gospel made known, this labour may be spared.

Ans.

Ans. The ministry of the gospel was not intended only to plant a church, but to carry on its growth also.

When Paul plants, Apollos comes after and waters with his ministry, 1 Cor. iii. 6. When the foundation is laid, must not the house be built? and this Christ gave ministers to his church for, Eph. iv. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ.* The scaffold is not taken down, till the building be finished, but rather to be raised higher and higher as the fabrick goes up. Thus Paul went on in his ministry from lower points to higher, from foundation to superstructory truths, Heb. vi. 1.

A famous church was planted at Thessalonica, but there was something lacking in their faith, which Paul longed to come and carry on to further perfection, 1 Thes. iii. 10. Surely, they that think there is so little need of preaching, forget that the gospel is a mystery, such a mystery as can never be fully taught by the minister, or learned by the people; neither do they consider how many engineers satan hath at work continually to undermind the gospel, both as it is a mystery of faith and godliness also: hath not he his seedsmen that are always scattering corrupt doctrine? Surely then the faithful minister had need obviate their designs by making known the truth, that his people may not want an antidote to fortify them against their poison. Are there not corruptions in the bosoms of the best, and daily temptations from satan and the world to draw these forth, whereby they are always in danger, and oft sadly foiled?

In a word, is not grace planted in a cold soil, that needs cherishing from the gospel-ministry? Do we not see, that what is got in one sabbath by the preaching of the word, is, if not lost, yet much impaired by the next? Truly our hearts are like lean ground, that needs ever and anon a shower, or else the corn on it withers and changeth its hue. O what barren heaths would the most flourishing churches soon prove, if these clouds did not drop upon them? The Christians to whom Peter wrote, were of a high form, no novices, but well grounded and rooted in the faith; yet this did not spare the apostle his further pains, 2 Pet. i. 12. *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*

SECT. III.—*Use.* First, To the ministers. To reprove some; for encouragement to others. It reproves,

First, *The vain-glorious Preacher;* that instead of making known the mystery of the gospel, makes his errand into the pulpit to make himself known; who blows up his sermon (as butchers do the flesh they sell) with a windy pomp of words, and frames his discourse rather to tickle their ears, than to profit their

souls; to send them home applauding the preacher for his wit and parts, rather than admiring the excellencies of Christ, and riches of his grace. Thus many, alas, who should be factors for Christ, play the merchants for their own credit. They are sent to woo souls for Christ, and they speak one word for him, and two for themselves. This is a great wickedness, which blessed Paul solemnly clears himself of, 1 Thes. ii. 5, 6. *Nor as a cloak of covetousness, God is my witness, nor of men sought we glory.* O how seldom are any converted by such sermons! These *gloria animalia*, vain-glorious-preachers, they may be like Rachel, fair, but their ministry is like to be barren.

Secondly, *Abstruse Preachers*, who do not make the mysteries of the gospel known, but make truths plain in themselves mysterious by their dark perplexed discourses upon them. This was the unhappiness of the school-men that ruffled and ensared the plainest truths of the gospel with their harsh terms and nice questions, which else might have been wound off by an ordinary understanding. What is said of some commentators, the places on which they treat were plain till they expounded them, it may be said of some preachers, their text was clear till their obscure discourse upon it darkened it. What greater wrong can a preacher do his hearers than this? The preacher is to open scriptures, but these turn the key the wrong way, and lock them up from their knowledge. They are to hold up the gospel glass before their people, whereby they may see to dress their souls like a bride against their husband's coming: but by the time that they have breathed on their text, it is so obscured that they cannot see their face in it. That water is not the deepest, that is thickest and muddy: Nor the matter always the most profound, when the preacher's expression is dark and obscure. We count it a blemish in speech, when a man's pronunciation is not distinct.—I know not then how it should come to be thought a perfection, to be obscure in the delivery of our conceptions. The deeper and fuller the sculpture in the seal is, the clearer the impression will be on the wax. The more fully any man understands a thing, the more able he will be to deliver it plainly to others. As a clipt stammering speech comes from an impediment in the instruments of speech, so a dark and obscure delivery of our thoughts bewrays a defect in our apprehensions, except it should come from an affectation of soaring high in our expressions above the reach of vulgar understandings; and this is worst of all.

Thirdly, *The mere moral Preacher:* the stream of whose preaching runs not in an evangelical channel.

Moral duties he presseth, and sins against the moral law he exclaims against; neither dare I blame for that; the Christian's creed doth not vacate the ten commandments. One of the first sermons

sermons our Saviour preached, was most of it spent in pressing moral duties, Mat. v. And never more need to drive this nail to the head than in our days, in which Christianity hath been so wounded in its reputation by the moral dishonesty of many of its professors.

But I level my reproof against them for this, that they do not preach the law evangelically, and make that the main design of their ministry, for which they received their commission, and that is, to make known the mystery of the gospel; to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; *and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ*, Eph. iii. 8, 9. Did it make the Father undervalue Cicero's works (which otherwise he admired for their eloquence) only because his leaves were not perfumed with the sweet name of Jesus Christ? Surely then it is a foul blot upon their sermons and labours, who reveal little of Christ and the mystery of the gospel through the whole course of their ministry.

The woe is pronounced not only against the non-preaching minister, but the gospel-preaching minister also. *Woe to me, if I preach not the gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 16. An ethic lecture will not make thy people wise unto salvation. It were well if thou couldst preach thy drunken neighbours sober, and the riotous temperate; but this is no more than Plato did for his Polemo. This may make them men that were before beasts, but thou must get them to be saints, regenerate ones, preach them out of themselves, as well as out of their flagitious practices; from the confidence of their righteousness, as well as from the love of their sins, or else thou leavest them short of heaven. Well, then, smoke, yea fire them out of their moral wickednesses by the threatenings of the law; but rest not till thou hast acquainted them with Christ, and the way of salvation by him.

In a word, preach moral duties as much as thou wilt, but in an evangelical strain. Convince them they cannot do these without grace from Christ; for want of which, the heathens' virtues were but *splendida peccata*, gilded vices. *Per fidem venitur ad opera, non per opera venitur ad fidem:* We must come to good works by faith, and not to faith by good works. The tree must be good, before the fruit it bears can be so: *Without me ye can do nothing*. And then convince them, when they are most exact in moral duties, this must be their righteousness before God; the robe which they must cover their souls with (if they would not be found naked in his sight) must not be the home-spun garment of their own inherent righteousness wrought in them, but of Christ's righteousness, which he wrought for them.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

An Encouragement to Faithful Ministers, and how People, as well as Ministers, are to make known the Mystery of the Gospel.

IT affords a word of sweet encouragement to the faithful ministers of Christ.

Haply you have been long at work for Christ, and see little fruit of your labours; your strength is even spent, your candle is almost at the socket of old age; but your people are still carnal and obstinate, no sun will tan them, no arguments move them, filthy they are, and so will continue; to hell they will go, no gate can stop them; thou hast done thy very utmost to reclaim them, but all in vain. This is sad indeed (to them I mean), thus to go to hell by broad day-light, while the gospel shews them whither every step of their sinful course leads them: but thou hast cause of much inward peace and comfort, that thou hast done what God expects at thy hand; remember thy work is, *To make known the Mystery of the Gospel*, and upon their peril be it, if they embrace it not. God never laid it upon thee, to convert those he sends thee to: No, to publish the gospel is thy duty, to receive it is theirs. Abraham promiseth to discharge his servant of his oath, if the woman which he was to woo for his son would not follow him; and so will God clear thee of their blood, and lay it at their own door. *If thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*, Ezek. iii. 9. God judgeth not of his servants' work by the success of their labour, but by their faithfulness to deliver his message: *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eye of the Lord*, Isa. xlix.

Secondly, To the people.

As it is the minister's task to make known the mystery of the gospel in his pulpit, so your duty to do the same in your lives: the Christian's life should put his minister's sermon in print; he should preach that mystery every day to the eyes of his neighbours, which the minister preacheth once or twice a-week to their ears: as a true made dial agrees with the sun in its motion, and as a well drawn picture resembles the face from which it is taken, so should thy conversation resemble that gospel which thou professest; let none have cause to say, what one once did of some loose Christians, *Aut hoc non est Evangelium, aut hi non sunt Evangelici.*

What hast thou to do with any sordid and impure practices, who pretendest to be instructed in this high and holy mystery?

Thy

Thy Christian name ill agrees with a heathen life; if thou sufferest any that is not of thy profession to out-strip thee, yea, but to keep pace with thee in any action that is virtuous, and truly honourable, thou shamest thyself, and the gospel also: What a shame were it, to find one in some trivial country-school, that should be able to pose a graduate in the university? Thou art trained up in such high and heavenly learning, as no other religion in the world can shew, and therefore your lives are to bear proportion to your teaching.

It was a sharp reproof to the Corinthian saints, when the apostle said, *Ye walk as men*, 1 Cor. iii. 3. that is, men in a natural state: and he that walks thus like men, will not walk much unlike the very beasts; for man is become brutish in his understanding, and it is worse to live like a beast, than to be a beast: Surely, Christian, if you have not your name for nought, you partake of a nature higher than human; your feet should stand where other men's heads are; you should live as far above the carnal world, as grace is above nature, as heaven is above earth.

Christ would never have stooped beneath angels, but to raise your hearts and lives above men: he would never have humbled himself to take human nature, but on a design to make us partakers of the divine; nor would he have walked on earth, but to make a way to elevate our hearts to heaven: Say not, therefore, flesh and blood cannot bear such an injury, or forbear such a sensual pleasure; either thou art more than a man, or less than a Christian; flesh and blood never revealed the gospel to thee; flesh and blood never received Christ; in a word, flesh and blood shall never enter into the kingdom of God.

If thou beest a Christian, thou art baptized into the spirit of the gospel, thou hast a heaven-born nature, and that will enable thee to do more than flesh and blood can do. Hast thou no desire to see others converted by the gospel? Wouldst thou steal to heaven alone, and carry none of thy neighbours with thee? Now how shalt thou win them into a good opinion of the gospel, but by such an amiable life as may commend it unto their consciences? It was a charge long ago laid upon Christianity, that it was better known in leaves of books, than in the lives of Christians: from hence it is, that many are hardened in their wickedness, and prejudice against the gospel; he is an unwise fisherman, that scareth away the fish which he desires to get within his net.

O! offend not those by scandals in thy life, whom thou wouldst have converted by the preaching of the gospel: There is now a-days (saith one) much talk, as if the time for the Jews' conversion were at hand: but, saith he, The loose lives of Christians do so disparage this heavenly mystery, that the time seems farther off: indeed

indeed the purity of Christians' lives is the best attractive to win others to the love of religion. Had Christ's doves more sweet spices of humility, charity, patience, and other heavenly graces, in their wings as they fly about in the world, they would soon bring more company home with them to the church's lockers: this is the gold that should overlay the temple of Christ's church, and would make others in love with its beauty; this was one happy means for the incredible increase of converts in the primitive times; then the mystery of the gospel was made known, not only by the apostles' powerful preaching, but by Christians' holy living. See how they walked, Acts ii. 46. and what was the blessed fruit of it, ver. 47. *They had favour with all the people, and the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved.* It would tempt any almost but a devil (who loves to live in the fire of contention, and is desperately hardened against all goodness) to have entered their names into such a heavenly society: but when this gold grew dim, then the gospel began to lose its credit in the world, and consequently its takings: converts came in slower, when those that professed the gospel began to cool in their zeal, and slacken in the strictness of their lives.

CHAP. X.

Boldness, a Duty in a Minister, in what he he is to express it, what kind of Boldness it must be.

THE third branch presents us with the manner how the minister is to make known the mystery of the gospel, *That I may open my mouth boldly.* We must here inquire,

1. What this boldness is, the apostle desires prayers for.
2. Wherein the minister is to express this boldness in preaching the gospel.
3. What kind of boldness it is that he must shew.
4. Some helps to procure boldness.

SECT. I.—First, What is meant by opening his mouth boldly: the words are *en parresia*, and import these two things.

1. To speak all that he hath in command from God to deliver, that lies full in the *etymon* of the words: thus Paul kept nothing back of God's counsel, Acts xx. 27. *He concealed not the words of the Holy One*, as Job's phrase is.

2. To speak with liberty and freedom of spirit, without fear or bondage to any, be they many or mighty. Now this is seen,

First, By speaking openly, and not in corners; the tricks of heretics

heretics and false teachers, who privily bring in their damnable doctrines: It is said, Christ spake that saying openly, Mark viii. 32.

Secondly, By speaking plainly: It shews some fear in the heart, when our words are dark and shady, that the preacher's judgment or opinion cannot easily be spelled from his words, he lays them so close and ambiguous: the minister is to speak the truth, freely and plainly; this was the apostle's boldness, 2 Cor. iii. 12. *Seeing that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.*

SECT. II.—2. Wherein the minister is to shew this boldness in preaching the gospel.

1. In asserting the truth of the gospel.

He is not to smother truth for the face or fear of any: Ministers are called witnesses; a witness is to speak what he knows, though it be in open court before the greatest of men. Paul had a free tongue to speak the truth, even in prison, though he was in bonds; yet he tells us, *The truth was not bound*, 2 Tim. ii. 9. Some truths will go down easily, to preach these requires no boldness; the worst in the congregation will give the preacher thanks for his pains upon some subjects: but there are displeasing truths, truths that cross the opinion (may be) of some in the assembly; to preach these, requires a free and bold spirit. When Christ was to preach before the Pharisees, he was not afraid to preach against their errors; had some wary preacher been to have stood in his place, he would have pitched upon such a subject, as should not have offended their tender ears.

There are truths that expose the preacher to scorn and derision, yet not to be concealed. Paul preached the resurrection, though some in the assembly mocked him for his pains. There are truths that sometimes may expose the minister to danger, truths that carry the cross at their back; such was that truth that Isaiah delivered concerning the rejection of the Jews, Rom. x. 20. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not.* This was like to enrage his countrymen, and bring their fists about his ears. We read of a word of patience, which we are to keep, Rev. vii. 10. Such a word, that the preacher had need of patience to deliver it, and Christians that profess it, because it may bring them into trouble, and draw the persecutors' sword against them. This is not always the same; the word of patience, in the apostles' time, was truths levelled against Judaism and heathenism; under the Arian emperors, it was the deity of Christ: In Luther's time, the doctrine of justification, and others asserted by him against the Romish church.

2. Boldness

2. Boldness in reproving sin, and denouncing judgment against impenitent sinners.

They are commanded to *lift up their voice like a trumpet, and tell Jerusalem her sins; Preach the word*, saith Paul, *be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, with all long-suffering.* He must reprove, and continue therein, while they continue to sin; the dog ceaseth not to bark, so long as the thief is in the yard: a minister without his boldness, is like a smooth file, a knife without an edge; a centinel that is afraid to let off his gun, when he should alarm the city upon a danger approaching. Nothing more unworthy, than to see people bold to sin, and the minister afraid to reprove: It is said of Tacitus, that he took the same liberty to write the emperors' lives that they took in leading them; so should the minister in reproving sin, be they who they will; not the beggar's sin, and spare the gentleman's; not the prophane, and skip over the professor's sin; it was all one to Christ, whoever sinned should hear of it; the Scribes and Pharisees, them he paid to purpose; neither connives he at his own disciples, but rebukes them sharply; *Get thee behind me, satan*, saith he, to Peter. *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* to his own mother, for her unreasonable importunity.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, What kind of boldness must the minister's be?

1. A convincing boldness.

How forcible are right words! saith Job; and how feeble empty words, though shot with a thundering voice! Great words in reproving an error or sin, but weak arguments produce laughter oftener than tears. Festus thought it unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him, Acts xxv. 27. Much more unreasonable is it in the pulpit to condemn an error, and not prove it so; a practice, and not convince of the evil of it.

The apostle saith of some, *Their mouths must be stopped*, Tit. i. 11. They are convincing arguments that must stop the mouth; empty reproofs will sooner open the mouths of those that are reproved wider than shut them; the spirit of God reproves by convincing, John xvi. 8. *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin*, elegxie, *he will convince:* And so should the minister; this is to preach in the evidence and demonstration of the spirit.

2. A wise boldness.

The minister is to reprove the sins of all, but to personate none. Paul being to preach before a lascivious and unrighteous prince, touched him to the quick, but did not name him in his sermon. Felix's

Felix's conscience would save Paul that labour; he trembled, though Paul did not say he meant him.

3. A meek boldness.

The words of wise men are heard in quiet, Eccl. ix. 17. Let the reproof be as sharp as thou wilt, but thy spirit must be meek. Passion raiseth the blood of him that is reproved, but compassion turns his bowels: the oil in which the nail is dipped, makes it drive the easier, which otherwise might have riven the board — We must not denounce wrath in wrath, lest sinners think we wish their misery; but rather with such tenderness, that they may see it is no pleasing work to us to rake in their wounds, but do it, that we might not, by a cruel silence and foolish pity, be accessary to their ruin, which we cordially desire to prevent. Jeremiah sounds the alarm trumpet, and tells them of a dismal calamity approaching; yet at the same time appeals to God, and clears himself of all cruelty towards them; Jer. xvii. 16. *I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day, thou knowest that which came out of my lips was right before thee:* As if he had said, I have delivered my message in denouncing judgment (for I durst do no other), but it was with a merciful heart; I threatened ruin, but wished for peace. Thus Daniel, he dealt plainly and roundly with the king, but ushers in his hard message with an affectionate expression of his love and loyalty to him; *My Lord, thy dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies,* Dan. iv. 19.

4. An humble boldness.

Such a boldness as is raised from a confidence in God, not from ourselves, or our own parts and ability, courage or stoutness: Paul is bold, and yet can tremble, and be in fear; bold, in confidence of his God, 1 Thes. ii. 2. *We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention;* but full of fear in the sense of our own weakness. 1 Cor. ii. 3. *I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling.*

5. A zealous boldness.

Our reproofs of sin must come from a warm heart. Paul's spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city given to idolatry. Jeremiah tells us, the word of God was as fire in his bones; it broke out of his mouth, as a flame out of the furnace: the word is a hammer, but it breaks not the flinty heart, when lightly laid on. King James said of a minister in his time, he preached as if death were at his back. Ministers should set forth judgment, as if it were at the sinner's back, ready to take hold of him. Cold reproofs or threatenings, they are like the rumblings of thunder afar off, which affrights not as a clap over our heads doth. I told you the minister's boldness must be meek

and

and merciful, but not to prejudice zeal. The physician may sweeten his pill to make his patient swallow it the better, but not to such a degree as will weaken the force of its operation.

SECT. IV.—1. We promised to propound some helps to procure this boldness.

1. A holy fear of God.

We fear man so much, because we fear God so little; one fear cures another, as one fire draws out another. When your finger is burnt, you hold it to the fire; when man's terror scares you, turn your thoughts to meditate on the wrath of God; this is the plaister that God lays to Jeremiah's wrists, to cure his aguish distemper of man's fear, Jer. i. 17. *Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.* If we must be broken in pieces (so is the original), better man do it, than God; what man breaks in pieces, God can make whole again. *He that loseth his life for my sake, and the gospel's, the same shall save it*, Mark viii. 35. But if God breaks us in pieces, it is beyond the skill of man to gather the shreds, and re-make what God hath marred.

Secondly, Castle thyself within the power and promise of God for thy assistance and protection.

He that is a coward in the open field, grows valiant and fearless when got within strong walls and bulwarks. Jeremiah was even laying down his arms, and flying from the face of those dangers, which his ministry to a rebellious and enraged people exposed him to; hear what course he had in his thoughts to take, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach to him, and a derision daily, Jer. xx. 9. *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.* Now what kept him from this cowardly flight? ver. 11. *But the Lord is with me as a mighty and terrible one.* Now he takes heart, and goes on with his work undauntedly; our eye, alas, is on our danger, but not on the invisible walls and bulwarks which God hath promised to set about us. The prophet's servant, that saw the enemy's army approaching, was in a panic fright; but the prophet, that saw the heavenly host for his life-guard about him, cared not a rush for them all; if God be not able to protect thee, why dost thou go on his errand at all? if thou believest he is, why art thou afraid to deliver it, when he is able to deliver thee?

3. Keep a clear conscience.

He cannot be a bold reprover, that is not a conscientious liver; such a one must speak softly for fear of waking his own guilty conscience; he is like one that shoots in a rusty foul piece, his reproofs recoil upon himself. Unholiness in the preacher's life, it either will stop his mouth from reproving, or the people's ears from receiving what he saith. O how harsh a sound does such a cracked

cracked bell make in the ears of his auditors? Every one desires, if he must be smitten, that it may be by the hand of the righteous, Psal. cxli.

Good counsel from a wicked man is spoiled by his stinking breath that delivers it. Our Saviour was fain to bid them hear the Pharisees, because their persons were a scandal to their doctrine, Mat. xxiii. 2, 3. Even those that are good, are too prone to turn their back off the ordinance, for the scandal of him that officiates; this is their weakness and sin, but woe be to them at whose wickedness they stumble upon this temptation. It shews the man hath a very good stomach, that can eat his dinner out of a slovenly cook's hands; and a very sound judgment, and quick appetite to the word, that can fall to, and make a hearty meal of it, without any squeamish scrupulosity or prejudice from the miscarriages of the preacher.

4. Consider that which thou most fearest, is best prevented by thy freedom and holy boldness in thy ministry.

Is it danger to thy life thou fearest? No such way to secure it, as by being faithful to him that hath the sole disposal of it; in whose hands thinkest thou are thy times? surely in God's; then it is thy best policy to keep him thy friend; for when thy ways please him, he can make thy enemies to be at peace with thee. Man-pleasing is both endless and needless; if thou wouldst, thou couldst not please all; and if thou couldst, there is no need, so thou pleasest one that can turn all their hearts, and bind all their hands.

They speed best that dare be faithful: Jonah was afraid of his work; O he durst not go to such a great city with so sad a message; to tell them they should be destroyed, was to set them at work to destroy him that brought the news: but how near was he losing his life, by running away to save it? Jeremiah seemed the only man like to lose his life by his bold preaching, yet had fairer quarter at last than the smooth preachers of the times; however, it is better to die honourably, than live shamefully. Is it thy name thou art tender of? if thou beest free and bold, the word thou deliverest will be a reproach and daily derision to thee, as once to Jeremiah: thou mayest indeed be mocked by some, but thou wilt be reverenced by many more; yea, even they that wag their heads at thee, carry that in their conscience will make them fear thee; they are the flattering preachers (who are partial in the law) that become base among the people, Mal. ii. 9.

SECT. V.—5. Consider, if thou beest not now bold for Christ in thy ministry, thou canst not be bold before Christ at his judgment bar; he that is afraid to speak for Christ, will certainly be ashamed to look on his face then.

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We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 10. Now what use doth Paul make of this serious meditation? *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*, ver. 11. It is no wisdom to provoke the judge, by flattering the prisoner: A serious thought of that day, as we are going to preach, would make us shut all base fear out of the pulpit: It is a very small thing to be judged by man now for our boldness, but dismal to be condemned by Christ for our cowardice. This is man's judgment-day, as Paul calls it, 1 Cor. iv. 3.—Every one dares tax the preacher, and pass his sentence upon him, if he pleaseth not his itching ear; but Christ will have his judgment-day also to judge them, that now take upon them to judge others, and his sentence will easily reverse theirs; yea, even those that now condemn thy freedom to reprove, would be the first to accuse thee for thy sinful silence. The wicked servant, who likes the remissness of his master's government (whereby he may play his ungodly pranks without controul), cries out of him at the gallows, and is oft heard there, to lay both his sins and sad catastrophe of his life (to which it brings him) at his master's door, saying, If he had reproved me, the magistrate had not condemned me; if he had done his duty, the hangman had not now been to do his office. Thus may some at the last day accuse their cowardly ministers, and say, If they had told them their danger, they had not run into it; if they had been bold to reprove their sin, they had not been so impudent to live in the practice of it, which now hath brought them to everlasting shame and misery.

6. Consider how bold Christ was in his ministry.

His very enemies were forced to give him this testimony, Luke xx. 21. *We know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.* He spared not the proudest of them, but to their head reproved them, and denounced the judgment of God against them, when in the midst of his enemies he was not daunted with their high looks or furious threats, but owned that very truth, which they made his capital crime, Mat. xxvii. 11. John xviii. 37. Hence Paul saith, *He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate*, 1 Tim. vi. 13. And useth this as the most powerful argument to conjure Timothy to be faithful in his ministry.

What greater incentive to valour can the soldier have, than to see his general before him stand with undaunted courage where the bullets fly thickest! Such valiant captains do not use to breed white-livered soldiers; it is impossible we should be dastardly, if instructed by him, and acted with his spirit. When the high-priest and elders saw the boldness of Peter and John (who were convented before them), they soon knew where they had

had got this heroic resolved spirit; for it is said, *They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus*, Acts xiv. 13.

7. Pray, and beg prayers for this holy boldness.

Thus did the apostles come by it; their boldness was not the product of any greatness of spirit they had above others; you see what stout soldiers they were in themselves, by their poor-spirited behaviour at Christ's attachment, when they all ran away in a fright, and left him to shift for himself; but it was the child of prayer, it was not bred in them, but granted from heaven unto them at their humble suit; see them praying hard for it, Acts iv. 29. *Now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word:* Mark, they do not pray against suffering, but for boldness to preach, whatever it may cost them. They desire not to be excused the battle, but to be armed with courage to stand in it; they had rather be lift above the fear of suffering, than have an immunity from suffering; let God but give them boldness to do their duty, and stand to their tackling, and they have enough. Now see how soon God sets his *fiat* to their prayers, ver. 31. *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.* There is the grace they desired, dropped into their bosom in a further measure than ever they had it.

If the soldier have a desire to fight for his prince, no doubt but he may have arms for asking; if this be thy sincere request, God will not deny it: See them also sending others to God upon this errand for them, Col. iv. 3. and here in the text. Certainly people cannot desire that of God for their minister, which both he and they need more. It is a difficult duty to them, but necessary for you; he cannot be a faithful minister, that dares not deliver all his message. When Mauritius, the emperor, had enquired of Phocas his disposition, he said, *Si timidus est, homicida est:* If he be timorous, he is a murderer. He that fears his people's faces, is the man that is most like to murder their souls; so that you pray for yourselves, while you endeavour to pray down this gift upon your minister.

CHAP. XI.

The Ministers called Ambassadors, their Dignity and Duty shewn therefrom.

For which I am an Ambassador in Bonds.

WE are at length got to the last general head in the words, the argument with which the apostle backs his request, the more effectually to provoke them to the remembrance of him in their prayers, and it is double.

1. From his office, *For which I am an Ambassador.*
2. From his present afflicted state, *An Ambassador in bonds.*

First, Of the first, His office.

Ambassadors being messengers of state sent by princes abroad about the great affairs of their kingdom, it behoves all good subjects to wish them good speed and success in their embassy.—Upon this account Paul, being sent from the great God in embassage as apostle to the Gentiles, desires the church's prayers for a happy success to the message he brings.

SECT. I.—Note, Ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors.

The apostle doth not monopolize this title, as if none were so besides himself; for elsewhere he reads others in his commission, 2 Cor. v. 20. *We are ambassadors for Christ*, that is, we apostles, who are now upon the place, and in the employment of the gospel, and such also as shall be dispatched after us to the end of the world upon the same errand. The authority of the apostles' extraordinary commission, and that which ordinary ministers after them have, is the same for substance; only they had their mission immediately from Christ's mouth, and were œcumenical, whereas ordinary ministers receive it from the church by an authority derived from Christ, and are fixed to their particular orbs, and are to lie as ambassadors leger in some one place, whither they are sent. In handling this point, we shall enquire into these three particulars.

First, Why ministers are called ambassadors.

Secondly, Why God chooseth to deliver his gospel by ambassadors.

Thirdly, Why he useth weak men, and not glorious angels, to be his ambassadors in this negociation.

First, Why are ministers called ambassadors? and that is,

1. To set out the dignity.
2. The duty of their function.

First, *The dignity.*

God

God by this title would procure an honourable esteem of the ministers calling in the hearts of all those to whom they are sent; this is more necessary to the good success of their message, than is generally thought. I know very well, that what ministers speak on this subject, they are thought in it to be rather kind to themselves, than friends to the gospel; men are prone to interpret it as a fruit of their pride, and an affectation they have of some outward grandeur, and worldly pomp, which they design to gain by such a magnificent title: the apostle himself was sensible of this, and therefore, 1 Cor. iv. when in the first verse he had called for that respect which was due to the ministers' function; *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;* he gives a caveat, ver. 5. *That they would judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.* Then it shall be known from what spirit it is that we ministers magnify our office, and have been acted by in our function; and also by what spirit they are moved, who vilify and despise both it and our persons, for our calling's sake.

SECT. II.—Now the dignity of gospel-ambassadors will appear in three things.

1. In the greatness of the prince from whom they come.
2. The greatness of the person whose place they supply.
3. The excellency of the message they bring.

First, The majesty of the prince from whom they come.

Ambassadors have their respect according to the rank of their master that sends them; the greater the prince, the more honourable is his messenger. Now the ministers of the gospel come from the great God, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, by whom they reign, and of whom they hold all their principalities. This is their master, in whose name they come; therefore Moses, when he was to deliver his message to Israel, bids them ascribe greatness to that God, whose name and will he was to publish, Deut. xxxii. 3.

The potentates of the world have found, to their cost, how deeply God takes himself concerned in the affronts that are done to his servants; what brought Israel's flourishing kingdom to ruin, but their mocking his messengers, and misusing his prophets? *Then the wrath of the Lord arose against them till there was no remedy*, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. We cannot despise the messenger, and honour his master that sends him, Luke x. 16. Few are so bold as to say, with that proud king, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Exod. v. 2. But too many dare say, Who is the minister, that I should obey his message, repent at his summons, tremble at the words he delivers? forgetting, alas, they have God's authority for what they say; and so by a slanting blow they hit God himself in contemning his ambassador.

Secondly, The greatness of the person, whose place the minister supplies; ministers are but deputy ambassadors; Christ himself had the first patent, called therefore the messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. and the apostle of our profession, Heb. iii. 1. From him the ministers receive their authority: *All power is given to me, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,* Mat. xxviii. 18. So 2 Cor. v. 20. *We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* As if the apostle had said, We do but deliver that message which Christ should and would have done, had he not been called to heaven about the affairs of his church, and therefore hath left us as his deputies to carry on that ministry which himself began while he was here below. Now, what an honour is it for a poor creature to stand up in Christ's room, and bring that message to poor sinners which was first committed unto him!

Thirdly, The excellency of the message they bring.

There are three kinds of embassies in the world which make way for their honourable entertainment, that are the messengers to bring them to any state: embassies for peace, embassies for marriage, and, thirdly, for trade.

SECT. III.—1. Embassies for peace.

Beautiful are their feet, and honoured are their persons, that bring glad tidings of peace along with them; especially when these four things concur in their embassage, which will be all found in the minister's negociation!

First, When an ambassador comes from some puissant prince, whose power is formidable, and armies irresistible; an ambassador from such a prince to a people naked and unarmed, for peace and amity, O how welcome is his approach!

Such a king we come from, he offers not peace, because he cannot maintain a war, or stands in need of our friendship. Sinners need his favour, but he fears not their hostility; never could they yet shoot out any of their arrows so high as heaven, but all have come down upon their own heads. What can he that spits against the wind, but look to have it blown back upon his own face? and he that fights with God, but expect to have his weapons beat back to his own head?

Worldly princes treat when they cannot fight; think not so of God; his instruments of death are ready, no place where he hath not his armed troops able to fetch in his proudest enemies. No creature so little, but contains an army in it big enough to tame the proudest king in the world. The worm under Herod's foot, at God's command, shall seize on him, and eat out his heart. O with what fear and trembling should the ambassadors of this God be received! When Samuel the prophet came to Bethlehem, the elders

elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, *Comest thou in peace?* 1 Sam. xvi. 4.

2. When such a puissant prince sends his ambassadors for peace to a people that have already felt the impressions of his power, and are pining under the bleeding miseries which their war have brought upon them, O how would they run to open their city-gate to this ambassador! as willingly surely as Noah opened the window to receive the dove that brought the olive-branch after that dismal flood.

This is the deplored state which the ministry of the gospel finds mankind involved in. What a forlorn condition hath our war with heaven brought us into? Do we not feel the arrows of divine vengeance sticking in our very hearts and consciences? the curse of God cleaving to every faculty of our souls, and member of our bodies? Are not all the creatures in arms against us? and doth not hell from beneath open its devouring mouth upon us, ready to swallow us up in everlasting destruction? And yet are we so stout, that we can find no lodging in our town for his ambassadors, but a prison? no entertainment to the offers of peace they make, but contempt and scorn?

3. When the terms of peace he brings are honourable.

Gold (we say) may be bought too dear, and so may the peace of one state with another, As when Nahash the Ammonite offered peace with the men of Jabesh-Gilead, but upon condition that they should every man have his right eye thrust out, to lay it as a reproach on Israel, and therefore was rejected with just indignation; they resolving rather to die with honour, than live with shame. It is the custom among many of this world's princes, to make their demands according to the length of their sword; where their power is great, it is hard to have peace on easy terms.

Now this, one would think, should make the ministers of the gospel and their message, infinitely welcome to poor sinners, that though they come from the great God, that may make his own demands, (for who may say to God, *What dost thou?*) and might not only require the eye out of our head, but force the very heart out of our body, yet offers peace on such gracious terms, that we could not possibly have framed them so to our own advantage, had we been left to draw them, as he of his own free grace is pleased to propound them, there being nothing in the whole instrument of peace provided for himself, besides the securing of his own glory in our salvation.

See a little what he offers to poor sinners, and what he requires of them again. He offers to seal an act of oblivion, wherein all wrongs done to his crown and dignity in the time of our hostility against him shall be forgiven, and forgotten: so runs the pro-

mise, *He shall forgive them their iniquities, and remember them no more.* He will not only forgive what is past, but receive our persons into favour for the future. A prince may save the malefactor's life, but for ever banish his person from court; but he promiseth access into his presence, Rom. v. 20. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace* (or favour) *wherein we stand.* Yea, he promiseth to restore the sinner to all that by his rebellion was forfeited. Treason taints the blood, degrades from honour, and confiscates the estate. God offers to take off the whole curse which befel the sinner for his rebellion, and restore him to his primitive dignity; he gives them power to become his children, John i. 12. and as his children makes them his heirs, and that not to an inheritance below only, but to heaven itself, an inheritance in light, beyond all expression glorious; for godliness hath both the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.

Now let us see what he expects at the sinner's hand, not to purchase this his favour with a ransom out of his own purse: No, he empties his Son's veins to pay that: But he requires us,

First, To lay down the weapons of our rebellion; for he cannot in honour treat with us, while we have that sword in our hand with which we have fought against him.

Secondly, To accept our pardon and peace at the hand of free-grace, attributing the glory of it to the mere mercy of God as the moving, and Christ's satisfactory obedience as the meritorious cause.

Thirdly, That we shall swear fealty and allegiance to him for the future: How reasonable these are; those that now reject them shall confess with infinite shame and horror for their folly, when Christ shall pack them to hell, by his irrevocable sentence.

Fourthly, and lastly, When in all this a prince is real in the offers of peace, he makes and gives full security for the performance of what he promiseth; this must needs make the ambassador that brings them still more welcome. Treaties of peace among men are too often used but as a handsome blind for war; they intend least, what they pretend most. But when an ambassador comes plenipotentiary, and enabled to give full security and satisfaction against all fears and jealousies that may arise in the breasts of those he treats with, this gives a value to all the rest.

Now the great God hath wonderfully condescended to satisfy the querulous hearts of poor sinners; guilt hath made man suspicious of God; his own unfaithfulness makes him jealous of God's faithfulness to him. Could Satan make Eve so soon question the truth of God's promise? He saith but, *Has God said, Ye shall not die?* and she is presently shaken out of her faith on her Maker, to believe her destroyer. O how easy then is it for him

him to nourish those suspicions which do naturally breed now in our unbelieving hearts! How oft are we putting it to the question, Will God forgive so great, so many sins? May I venture to believe? Now God gives his ambassadors instructions from his word to satisfy all the doubts and scruples which he injects, or which may arise from our misgiving hearts. *Tota scriptura hoc agit*, saith Luther, *ne dubitamus, sed certo speremus.* The whole scripture drives at this, to satisfy our doubts, and assure our hopes in the mercy of God.

St. Paul hath a passage something like this, Rom. xv. 4. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.* There are many expedients men use to satisfy the minds of those they deal with concerning the truth of their promises, and certainty of their performing them: Sometimes they ratify them with their seal set to the writing. Thus God gives the broad seal of the sacraments, and privy seal of his spirit, to assure the believer he will perform all he hath promised in his word. Sometimes witnesses are called in for further security of the conveyance. Thus in the purchase Jeremiah made of his kinsman's field, he took witnesses to the bargain, Jer. xxxii. 10. See witnesses both in heaven and earth, ready to vouch the truth of what God promiseth, and all agree in their verdict, 1 John v. 7, 8.

If all these will not do, then an oath is taken, and this useth to be an end of all controversies: To this also doth God graciously condescend, not that God's promise needs the suretyship of his oath to make it surer; for it is as impossible God should lie when he promiseth, as when he swears; but to make our faith stronger, which needs such supporters as these to stay and strengthen it; as is hinted in that sweet place, Heb. vi. 18. from which one flower the sincere believer may suck honey enough to live comfortably upon in the hardest longest winter of affliction that can befal him; *Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutables, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation*, &c. Now the greater security God enables his ambassadors to offer poor sinners for the salvation they preach in his name, the more prodigiously provoking is their unbelief and impenitency who reject it. When Titus Vespasian came into Jerusalem, and saw the unspeakable miseries which the besieged had endured from three sore plagues, viz. sword, pestilence, and famine, that had so long raged among them, it is said, that he broke out into these words: "I am not guilty of all this blood which hath been shed, nor of the

the miseries this people have endured; they by their obstinacy have brought it upon their own heads."

O how much more may the ambassadors of Christ wash their hands over the heads of impenitent sinners, to whom they have so often offered pardon and peace in God's name (but they would not hearken), and say, We are free from your blood, it is your own obstinacy and desperate impenitency hath undone your precious souls; would you have accepted life at the hands of mercy, you would not have been cut off by the sword of his justice.

SECT. IV.—2. Such as come to offer an alliance by marriage between one state and another, this is one great part of the minister's embassage.

They are sent to let the world know what good will the God of heaven bears to poor sinners; that he can be content to bestow his only Son and heir in marriage upon them, if they also upon treaty can like the match; nay more, both Father and Son do earnestly desire it; it is a match which God himself first thought on for his Son; it sprang from the counsel of his own will, and when this great intendment was transacted betwixt Father and Son (as it was before the foundation of the world), the Son declared his liking of it to his Father; yea, expressed the dear affection he bore to mankind; for then it was, that he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.

In pursuance of which, when the fulness of time was come, he took his progress from heaven to earth, that by marrying our nature, he might also enter a near alliance with the persons of believers; this is the match God's ambassadors come to negociate with you; the scriptures are their credential letters, that confirm under God's own hand-writing and seal, the truth of all they offer in his name; there you have the picture of this heavenly prince they woo your affections for, drawn to the life in his glory, love, and holiness, that, by knowing him, you may the better take liking to his person; these are the rich bracelets of the promises, which his messengers are in his name to deliver to those willing souls that shall entertain the motion, and declare their conset to take him for their Lord and husband; yea, they have authority to pronounce the contract, and to promise in Christ's name marriage, which at the great day he will perform unto them, 2 Cor. xi. 2. *I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Stand here and adore, ye children of men, this low stoop of the Divine Majesty! O that ever it should enter into the heart of the great God, to match his Son unto his creature! and that not of the noblest house among them, for he took not upon him the nature of angels, but of mankind; not in its primitive state, but when

when it was lapsed and degraded of its primitive glory. For a high-born prince to take a poor damsel out of the beggar's row, is a thing that yet the world hath not been acquainted with; but to take one from the meanest cottage, were not so strange as to take her from the gaol to the bar, where she is condemned for treason against his royal person; yet this is the very case: the Lord offers to lift up the head of his rebel-creature out of prison, where it lies under a sentence of death for horrid treason against his crown and dignity, to take it into his bed and bosom.

Truly, I know not at which most to wonder; whether the mercy of God in making love to us, or our pride and folly that are so coy and hardly persuaded to entertain the motion. Though Abigail confessed herself unworthy to be David's wife, she was too wise to stand in her own light, by letting slip such an opportunity for her preferment, as was not like again to occur; therefore it is said, *She made haste to go with David's servants.* But, alas, how do we either broadly deny, or foolishly make excuse, and hold God's messengers in suspense from day to day!

SECT. V.—5. Such as come with embassies for commerce and trade.

Suppose a prince had in his kingdom such rich commodities, without which his neighbour nation could not subsist, nor could find elsewhere: if this prince should send an ambassador to this people, and offer them a free trade, that they might come as oft as they pleased, and take of the good things of his land, O how joyfully would such an embassy be embraced!

Man's happiness on earth lies in a free trade and commerce with heaven; this world is a barren beggarly place, nothing is here to be had that an immortal soul can live upon, or find satisfaction from. In heaven alone, what it needs is to be found; the food it must live on, the clothes it must wear, are both of the growth of that heavenly country. Man's first sin spoiled all his trade with heaven: No sooner did Adam rebel, than a war was commenced, and all trade with him forbidden; therefore, in our natural state, we are said to be *afar off, and without God in the world.* The sad effects of this loss are to be seen in the forlorn condition of man's soul, which was once so gloriously arrayed with righteousness and holiness, but now shamefully naked, not having a rag to cover its shame withal. Now, God sends his ambassadors to offer peace, and with it liberty to return to its first communion with him, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* He invites all to turn merchants with heaven, *Come ye to the waters;* by which phrase the gospel is compared to a port-town,

or

or its key-side, to which the crier calls people to repair, and buy commodities that are there landed.

Here it is that God sets forth the riches of his grace to view and sale, without money and without price. This must needs be a gainful trade, without much cost exported; here is all the riches of heaven to be had, and no money required for the purchase.—Can you hear of this pearl of great price, and not turn merchants for it? Or can your souls be maintained by your peddling worldly trade? O why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? It is not necessary you should be rich in the world, but it is necessary you should have Christ and his grace. In all your pains and travail for the things of this world, you are but merchant-adventurers, it is a hazard whether you get them, or lose your labour. There is no certain rule and method can be learned for growing rich in the world; there are some poor as well as rich of every trade; but in this trade for Christ and his grace there is an office erected to insure all your adventure: *His soul shall live that seeks the Lord: He that hungers after righteousness, shall be satisfied.*

2. Ministers are called ambassadors, in regard of their duty, as well as dignity.

Where there is *honos*, there is *onus*; places of honour are places of trust and service. Many like well enough to hear of the minister's dignity, with Diotrephes, they love pre-eminence, and would willingly be excused the labour that attends it. None have a greater trust deposited in their hands than the minister. It is *tremendum onus*, a weight that made the apostle tremble under it: *I was among you*, saith Paul, *with much fear and trembling*. To them is *committed the word of reconciliation*, 2 Cor. v. 20. If the treaty of peace between God and sinners doth not speed, the ambassador is sure to be called to an account how he discharged his place: But more of the minister's duty as an ambassador afterwards.

CHAP. XII.

Why God sends Ambassadors; why he treats not with Sinners in an Immediate Way; and why he useth Men, not Angels.

THE second thing we propounded to give an account of was, why God would send ambassadors to his poor creature.

I answer, First, Negatively.

1. Not because he needs man's good-will.

Earthly

Earthly princes their affairs require they should hold a correspondence with their neighbours; therefore they send ambassadors to procure peace, or preserve amity: But God can defend his crown without the help of allies.

2. Not because he was bound to do it.

There is a law of nations, yea of nature, that obliges princes before they commence a war, to offer peace: But the great God cannot be bound, except he binds himself. When Adam sinned, God was free, and might have chosen whether he would make a new league with man, or take vengeance on him for breaking his faith in the first.

But affirmatively.

No other account can be given for this, but the good-will and free-grace of God. When Christ (who is the prime ambassador) landed first on earth, see what brought him hither, Luke i. 7, 8. *Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us.* Tender mercy indeed, for the life of man lay under God's foot at his pure mercy: He was no more bound to treat with his creature, than a prince with a traitor legally condemned. Wherever God's ambassadors come, they come on mercy's errand, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15. *The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people.*

Quest. *But if God will treat with his poor creatures, why doth he it by ambassadors, and not by himself immediately?*

Answ. This is the fruit of divine indulgence; sin hath made the presence of God dreadful; man cannot now well bear it.

What a fright was Adam put into when he heard but the voice of God walking towards him in the garden, and not furiously rushing upon him? The Jews had the trial of this, Exod. xx. 19. they soon had enough of God's presence, and therefore came to Moses, saying, *Speak thou with us, but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*

Quest. *But if God will use ambassadors, why did not God employ some glorious angel from heaven to bring this message, rather then weak and frail men?*

Answ. The apostle gives us the reason, 2 Cor. iv. 7. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us;* or as in the original, *in vessels of shell.*

As the precious pearl is found in a shell, so this precious treasure of the gospel shall be found in a frail man, that the excellency of the work may be of God. The more contemptible the instrument, the more glorious appears his divine power in the using it for so high and noble an end. To see a man wound another with a sword that is sharp and weighty, would carry no wonder; but

but to wound him with a feather in his hand, this would speak it a miracle; to see men fall down and tremble when an angel (a creature of such might and glory) is the speaker, is no great wonder; but to behold a Felix quivering on the bench, while a man, and he a poor prisoner at the bar, preacheth to his judge, this carries a double wonder.

First, That so poor a creature as Paul was, and in the condition of a prisoner, durst be so bold: and also that so great a person as Felix was should be smitten with his words, as if some thunderbolt had struck him, who will not adore the power of a God in the weakness of the instrument? Had God employed angels in this business, we should have been in danger of ascribing the efficacy of the work to the gifts and parts of the instrument, and of giving credit to the message for the messenger's sake, that is so honourable; but now, God sending those that are weak creatures like ourselves, when any thing is done by them, we are forced to say, it is the Lord's doing, and not the instrument.

What reason God had this way to provide for the safe-guarding his own glory, we see by our proneness to idolize the gifts of men, where they are more eminent and radiant than in others.—What would we have done, if angels had been the messengers? Truly, it would have been hard to have kept us from worshipping them, as we see John himself had done, if he had not been kept back by the angel's seasonable caveat, Rev. xix. 10.

Secondly, Ministers, being men, have an advantage many ways above angels for the work.

1. As they are more nearly concerned in the message they bring, than angels could have been; so that they cannot deceive others, without a wrong to their own salvation. What greater argument for one's care, than his own interest? Surely that pilot will look how he steers the ship that hath an adventure in the freight.

2. Their affections have a naturalness arising from the sense of those very temptations in themselves, which their brethren labour under.

This an angel could not have; and by this they were able to speak more feelingly to the condition of other men than an angel could do. So that what man wants of the angel's rhetoric, is recompenced with his natural affection and sympathy, flowing from experience. He knows what a troubled conscience is in another, by having felt it throb in his own bosom; as God told his people, having been themselves sojourners in Egypt, *You know the heart of a stranger*. And who will treat poor souls with more mercy, than they who know they need it themselves?

3. The sufferings which ministers meet with for the gospel's sake, are a great advantage to their brethren.

Had

Had angels been the ambassadors, they could not have sealed to the truth of their doctrine they preached with their blood.—Paul's bonds were famous at court and country also, Phil. i. 14. *Many of the brethren waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Angels might have sounded the trumpet of the gospel with a shriller voice; but men alone have pitchers to break (I mean frail bodies), by suffering for the gospel, whereby the glory of its truths (like the lamp in Gideon's soldiers' hand) shines forth upon the eyes of their greatest enemies, to the confusion of their faces, and amazement of their hearts.

CHAP. XIII.

An Exhortation to hearken to God's Ambassadors, pressed from several Arguments.

Use 1. ARE ministers ambassadors? This shews the gospel-ministry to be an office peculiar to some, not a work common to all. An ambassador, we know, is one that hath his commission, and credential letters from his prince to shew for his employment; it is not man's skill in state affairs that makes him an ambassador; not ability in the law that makes a man a magistrate, but their call to these places; neither do gifts make a man a minister, but his mission; *How can they preach, except they be sent.*

The rules which the spirit of God gives about a minister's admission into his function, were all to no purpose, if it lay open to every man's own choice to make him a preacher: *Lay hands suddenly on no man,* 1 Tim. v. 22. That is, admit none to the ministry without good proof and trial; but why should any be set apart for that which every man can do?

Secondly, Of exhortation.

1. To the people.

2. To the minister.

SECT. I.—1. To the people.

Be persuaded in the fear of God to hearken to the message these ambassadors bring; what mean you to do in the business they come to treat about? will you be friends with God or no? Take Christ by faith into your embraces, or resolve to have none of him: we are but ambassadors, back again we must go to our master that sends us, and give an account what comes of our negociation.

Shall

Shall we go and say, Lord, we have been with the men thou sentest us unto; thy message was delivered by us according to our instructions; we told them fire and sword, ruin and damnation, would come upon them, if they did not at thy call repent and turn; we laid both life and death before them, and spared not to reveal the whole counsel of God for their salvation; but they believed not a word we spake; we were to them as those that mocked, or told what we dreamed in the night, and not the words of truth and faithfulness. O God forbid, that this should be the report which at their return they make to God of their negociation! But the more to affect you with the importance of their message, and your answer to it, consider,

First, The wonderful love of God in sending you these ambassadors.

It is not a prince that sends to one of his own rank, but a God to his rebel creature, against whom he might have sent, not an ambassador to treat, but an army of judgments to fight and destroy: it is not against rebels that are intrenched in some place of strength, or in the field with a force wherewith you are able to resist his power; but to his prisoners, fettered and manacled, to you that have your traitorous head on the block; it is not any need that he hath of your life, that makes him desire your salvation. A prince sometimes saves his rebellious subjects, because he needs their hands to fight for him, and weakens himself by shedding their blood; but God can ruin you, and not wrong himself: if you perish, it is without his damage. Luke vii. 30. the pharisees are said to *reject the counsel of God against themselves;* it is you that suffer, not God.

SECT II.—Secondly, Consider what an intolerable affront is given to the majesty of heaven by rejecting his offers of grace.

Princes' requests are commands; who dare deny a king what he asks? and darest thou, a poor thimble-full of dust, stout it out against thy Maker? It is charged upon no less than a king, as an act of unsufferable pride, *That he did evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord,* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.

But what! must a king come down from his throne, and humble himself before a poor prophet, that was his own subject? yes, when he represents the person of that king, to whom he was himself a subject; God will have him tremble, and bow, not to Jeremiah, but to Jeremiah *speaking from the mouth of the Lord.*

O consider this, ye that think it childish and poor-spiritedness to weep at a sermon, to humble yourselves at the reproof of a minister; your carriage under the word preached, declares what your thoughts of God himself are: When Naash slighted David's

ambas-

sadors, and abused them, the king took the scorn upon himself. *I will publish the name of the Lord,* saith Moses, *ascribe ye greatness unto our God,* Deut. xxxii. 3. How should they ascribe greatness to God, while Moses is preaching to them? surely he means by their humble attendance on, and ready obedience to, the word he delivered in God's name.

3. Consider how much the heart of God is engaged in the message his ambassador brings.

When a prince sends his ambassador about a negociation, the success of which he passionately desires, and from which he promiseth himself much honour, to be opposed in this, must needs greatly provoke and enrage him. There is nothing that God sets his heart more upon than the exalting of Christ and his grace through him in the salvation of poor sinners; this therefore is called his *counsel,* Heb. vi. 18. *The pleasure of the* Lord, Isa. liii.

Abraham's servant knew how much he desired a wife for his son and heir among his kindred, and therefore presseth Laban with this, as the weightiest argument of all other; *If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; if not, tell me:* As if he had said, by this the truth of your love to my master will be seen.

So here, if ye will indeed deal kindly with God, tell his ambassadors so, by your complying with them in that which he so affectionately desires: this the Lord Jesus, when on earth, called *his Father's business,* which must be done, whatever comes of it; Luke ii. 49. *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* He knew he had never come hither, but for the dispatch of this, and could not look his Father in the face when he went back, except this was finished; therefore as this sped, and the work of the gospel made progress, or met with any stop in the hearts of men, he mourned or rejoiced; when it was rejected, we find him grieved for the hardness of their hearts, Mark iii. 5. When his disciples made report how victoriously the chariot of the gospel ran, *In that hour,* it is said, *he rejoiced in spirit,* Luke x. 21. While he was taking leave of the world, his thoughts are at work how the gospel should be carried on, and the salvation of souls suffer no prejudice by his departure, he therefore empowers his apostles for the work; *All power is given me, Go, preach the gospel to all nations.* Yea, now in heaven he is waiting for the success of it, and listening how his servants speed in their errand. Now what a prodigious sin is it, by thy impenitence to withstand God in his main design? Do you indeed deal kindly with our master, whose embassy we bring?

SECT. III.—4. Consider the weight and importance of the

message these ambassadors bring unto you, it is not a slight, sleeveless errand we come about.

We set before you this day life and good, death and evil, Deut. xxx. 15. *Hear, and your souls shall live*, Isa. lv. *He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him*, John iii. 36. We come not to entice you with the favour of an earthly prince, who may promise honours to-day, and lose his own crown to-morrow. We bait not our hook with the world's treasures or pleasures, but bring you news of a heaven that shall as surely be yours, as you are now on earth, if you accept of the offer. We scare you not with the displeasure of a mortal man, whose breath is in his nostrils; not with the momentary torment of the rack or gibbet, which continue hardly long enough to be felt; but with the never-dying wrath of the ever-living God; and what we either promise or threaten in God's name, he stands ready and resolved to perform; Isa. xliv. 26. *He confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers.*

5. Consider on what terms the gospel and its messengers stay among you. There is a time when God calls his ambassadors home, and will treat no longer with a people, and that must needs be a sad day! for when they go, then judgments and plagues come; if the treaty ends, it will not be long before the war begins. *Elisha died, and the bands of Moabites invaded the land*, 2 Kings xiii. 20. The prophet once gone, then the enemy comes: the angel plucks Lot out of Sodom, and how long had they fair weather after? The Jews put away the gospel from them by their impenitency, which made the apostles turn to the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 46. But they did not thereby call for their own ruin and destruction, which presently came flying on the Roman eagle's wings to them; they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and God thought them unworthy also to have a temporal; if once God calls home his ambassadors, it is no easy matter to bring them back, and get the treaty (now broke up) set on foot again.

God can least endure, upon trial being made of him, to be slighted in that which he makes account is one of the highest ways he can express his favour for a people; better no ambassadors had come, than to come, and go *re infecta*, without effecting what they came for; *They shall know*, saith God, *they had a prophet among them*, Ezek. ii. 5. That is, they shall know it to their cost; God will be paid for his ministers' pains. Now ministers die, or are removed from their people, and glad they are to be so rid of them; but they have not done with them, till they have reckoned with God for them.

Secondly,

Secondly, To the ministers of the gospel; you see, brethren, your calling, let it be your care to comport with this your honourable employment.

CHAP. XIV

How Ministers should do the Duty of Ambassadors.

1. STAIN not the dignity of your office by any base unworthy practices.

Dignitas in indigno, saith Salvian, is *ornamentum in luto*. O lay not the dignity of your function in the dirt, by any sordid unholy actions: Paul magnified his office: do not you that which should make others vilify and debase it; that which make others bad, will make you worse; *Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?* John vi. 70. You are called angels, but if wicked, you become devils: We read of *a prophet's reward*, Mat. x. 4. which amounts to more than a private disciple's; and do you not think there will be a prophet's punishment in hell, as well as reward in heaven? One saith, if any were born without original sin, it should be the minister; if any could live without actual sin, it should be the minister; if there were such a thing as a venial sin, it should be in the ministers; they are more the servants of God than others, should not they be more holy than others? Art thou fit to be an ambassador, who art not a good subject? to be a minister, that art not a good Christian?

2. Keep close to thy instructions.

Ambassadors are bound up by their commission what they are to say; be sure therefore to take thy errand right, before thou ascendest the pulpit to deliver it. *I have received of the Lord that which I delivered to you*, saith Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 17. God bids the prophet, Ezek. iii. 17. *Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me*; it must be from him, or it is not right. O take heed thou dost not set the royal stamp upon thy own base metal: Come not to the people with, *thus saith the Lord*, when it is the divination of thy own brain. No such loud lie, as that which is told in the pulpit; and as thou must not speak what he never gave thee in commission, so not conceal what thou hast in command to deliver: it is as dangerous to blot out, as put in any thing to our message; Job comforted himself with this, *That he had not concealed the words of the Holy One*, Job vi. And Paul, from this, washeth his hands of the blood of souls, Acts xx. 26. 27. *I am pure from the blood of all men; I*

have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Pray observe, he doth not say, he had declared all the counsel of God; no, who can but God himself? The same apostle saith, *We prophecy but in part.*

There is a *terra incognita* in the scriptures, mysteries that were never fully discovered: we cannot declare all, that know not all; but he saith, *He shunned not to declare all.* When he met a truth, he did not step back to shun it, as when we see a man in the street, with whom we have no mind to speak, we step into some house or shop till he be past. The holy apostle was not afraid to speak what he knew to be the mind of God; as he had it from God, so should they from him; he did not baulk in his preaching what was profitable for them to know. Caleb (one of the spies sent to Canaan) could not give them a full account of every particular place in the land, but he made the best observation he could, and then brings Moses word again, *As it was*, saith he, *in my heart*, Josh. xiv. 7. While others basely concealed what they knew, because they had no mind to the journey; and this gained him the testimony from God's own mouth, to be a man *that followed him fully*, Numb. xiv. 23. So he that doth his utmost to search the scriptures, and then brings word to the people as it is in his heart, preaching what he hath learnt from it, without garbling his conscience, and detaining what he knows for fear or favour; this is the man that fulfils his ministry, and shall have the *euge* of a faithful servant.

Thirdly, Think it not enough that thou deliverest thy message from God, but shew a zeal for thy master, whose cause thou negociatest.

Should an ambassador, after audience had, and his errand coldly done, give himself up to the pleasures of the court where he is resident, and not much mind or care what answer he hath, nor how his master's business speeds, surely he could not say he had done the duty of a faithful ambassador: No, his head and heart must be both at work how he may put life into the business, and bring it soonest to the desired issue.

Abraham's servant would neither eat nor drink, till he saw which way his motion would work, and how they would deal with his master: Thus should ministers let those they are sent to see they are in earnest, that their hearts are deeply engaged in the embassy: When their people shew respect to their persons, though they are thankfully to receive this civility, yet they are to let them know this is not it they come for, or can be content with, but that they would deal kindly with their master, whose message they bring, and send them back to him with the joyful news of their repentance and acceptation of Christ; they should passionately endeavour their salvation, one while trying to dissolve them

them with the soft intreaties of love, another while beleaguring him with threatenings, that if they will to hell, they may carry this witness with them, that their destruction is of themselves, and comes not on them for want of your care and compassion to their souls: It is not enough you are orthodox preachers, and deliver truth, it is zeal God calls for at your hands. He so strongly himself desires the salvation of poor sinners, that he disdains you (whom he sends to impart it to them) should coldly deliver it, without shewing your good will to the thing.

Christ, when he sends his servants to invite guests to the gospel supper, bids them, *Compel them to come in*, Luke xiv. 23.— But how? surely not as the Spaniards did the Indians, who drove them to be baptized, as we drive cattle to watering, with staves and stones; we are not to pelt them in with outward violence and cruelty practised upon their bodies; but a spiritual force of argument, subduing their hearts in our powerful preaching: *Percutit aut faciat voluntarios, non salvet invitos*, Bern. When God smites the consciences of men with the terrors of his threatenings, it is to make them willing, not to save them against their wills.

Fourthly, Let not any person or thing in the world bribe or scare thee from a faithful discharge of thy trust.

Ambassadors must not be pensioners to a foreign prince. He is unworthy to send a prince in so honourable an employment, that dares not trust his master to defend and reward him; such a one will not long be faithful to his trust: Nor will he in the ministry, that rests not contented with God's promise for his protection or reward: O how soon will he for fear or favour seek to save his stake, or mend it, though it be by falsifying his trust to God himself! Blessed Paul was far from this baseness, and hath set a noble pattern to all that shall be God's ambassadors to the end of the world, 1 Thess. ii. 3. *As we are allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts; for neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know; nor a cloak of covetousness, God is our witness.*

5. Be kind to, and tenderly careful of, thy fellow subjects.

Were it not strange, if an ambassador sent from hence to Turkey, or Spain, instead of protecting or encouraging the English merchants there in their trade, should hinder their traffic, and employ all the power of his place to their prejudice or damage? Surely his prince sent him not to be an enemy, but a friend and patron to his good subjects there. The minister, as God's ambassador, is to encourage the saints in their heavenly trade, to assist them by his counsel, and protect them from the scorn that their wicked neighbours cast upon them for their goodness.

O how sad is it, if he shall bend his ministry against them! if he shall weaken their hands, and strengthen the hands of the ungodly, in or out of the pulpit, by his preaching or practice; better he were with a millstone tied about his neck, thrown into the sea, than thus to offend these little ones. Moses, he smote the Egyptian, but rescued the Israelite; what account will they make to God of their embassy, who in the very pulpit smite the Israelite with their tongues, twitting them for their purity, and stroke the Egyptian; the prophane and wicked, I mean, in their congregations, whereby they bless themselves, as going to heaven, when, God knows, their feet stand in the way that will undoubtedly lead them to hell.

CHAP. XV.

Five several Notes shortly touched upon, from Paul's being in Bonds.

THE second argument with which he stirs them up to his remembrance in their prayers, is his present afflicted state, *For which I am an ambassador in bonds.* In the Greek, *in a chain.*

When we hear of an ambassador, and a chain, we might at first expect it to be a chain of gold about his neck, and not a chain of iron about his leg or arm; yet it is the latter here is meant.—Paul was a prisoner at Rome, but in *libera custodia*, as it is thought by interpreters from this passage, *in a chain*, not in chains; it being usual there for a prisoner to be committed to the custody of some soldier, with whom he might walk abroad, having a chain on his right arm, which was tied to his keeper's left arm; such a prisoner, it is conceived, this holy man was now: Paul the lamb, was prisoner to Nero the lion, and therefore both needed and desired the church's prayers for him: many are the observables which this short passage might afford; I shall lightly touch them, but not enlarge upon them.

SECT. I.—1. Observe the usage which this blessed apostle finds from an ungrateful world; a chain is clapped upon him, as if he were some rogue or thief: He preacheth liberty to poor sinners, and is deprived of his own for his pains; he proclaims deliverance to the captives, and is used like a slave for his labour. One would wonder what they could get against so holy and innocent a person to accuse him for, who made it his daily exercise to live without offence to God and man; yet see what

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an indictment Tertullus prefers against him, Acts xxiv. as if there had not been such a pestilent fellow in the whole country as he: And Paul himself tells us, *he suffered trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds,* 2 Tim. ii. 9. Many grievous things were laid to his charge.

Whence note,

Note 1. That the best of men may, and oft do suffer, under the notion of vile and wicked persons.

Let the saints' enemies alone to black their person and cause. Christ himself must *be numbered among transgressors,* and no less than blasphemy laid to his charge. Persecutors think it not enough to be cruel, but they would be thought just while they are cruel. Jam. v. 6. *Ye have condemned and killed the just.* Here is a bloody murder committed with all the formalities of justice. They condemn first, and then kill. And truly, murder on the bench is worse, on God's account, than that which is perpetrated by a villain on the highway. Well, there is a time when Paul's cause, and the rest of suffering saints, shall have a fairer hearing than here they could meet with, and then it will appear with another complexion, than when drawn with his enemies' black coal. The names of the godly shall have a resurrection as well as their bodies. Now they are buried with their faces downward, their innocency and sincerity charged with many false imputations, but then all shall be set right. And well may the saints stay to be cleared, as long as God himself stays to vindicate his own government of the world from the hard speeches of the ungodly ones.

SECT. II.—Note 2. Secondly, Observe the true cause of Paul's sufferings.

It was his zeal for God and his truth; *For which I am in bonds:* That is, for the gospel, which I profess and preach; as that martyr, who, being asked how he came into prison, shewed his bible, and said, *This brought me hither.* Persecutors may pretend what they will, but it is their religion and piety that their spite is at. Paul was an honest man in the opinion of his countrymen, so long as he was of their opinion, went their way, and did as they did; but when he declared himself to be a Christian, and preached his gospel up, then they cried him down as fast; then his old friends turned new enemies, and all their fists were about his ears. The wicked are but the devil's slaves, and must do as he will have them.

Now it is truth and godliness that pulls down his kingdom; when therefore these appear in the saints' lives, then he calls forth the wicked world, as a prince would do his subjects into the field to fight for him: So that it is impossible to get to heaven without blows: *He that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall*

suffer persecution. That is, one way or other; and none more than the preacher: He puts his hand into the wasp's nest, and therefore must expect to be stung; he treads on the serpent's head, and it were strange if he should not turn again to bite him: But let not this trouble you; fear not what you can suffer, only be careful for what you suffer; Christ's cross is made of sweet wood; there are comforts peculiar to those that suffer for righteousness. When Sabina, a Christian martyr, fell in travail in the prison, and was heard to cry and make a dolour in those her child-bearing throes, some asked her, how she would endure the torments which her persecutors prepared for her, if she shrunk at those? *O*, saith she, *now I suffer for sin, then I shall suffer for Christ.*

SECT. III.—Note 3. Thirdly, Observe how close Paul sticks to the truth.

He will not part with it, though it brings him into trouble; he had rather the persecutor should imprison him for preaching the gospel, than he imprison it by a cowardly silence. He hath cast up his accounts, and is resolved te stand to his profession, whatever it may cost him. The truth is, that religion is not worth the embracing, that cannot bear one's charges in suffering for it; and none but the Christian is able to do this. Neither is he worth the name of a Christian, that dares not take Christ's bill of exchange to receive in heaven, what he is out in suffering for his sake on earth. And yet, alas, how hard is it to get faith enough to do this? 'Tis easier to bow at the name, than to stoop to the cross of Jesus. Many like religion for a summer-house, when all is fair and warm abroad in the world; but when winter comes, its doors are shut up, and nobody to be seen in or about it.

SECT. IV.—4. Observe the publication Paul makes of his sufferings to the church: He being now a prisoner, sends his dispatches to this and other churches, to let them know his condition.

From whence,

Note 4. First, That sufferings for the gospel are no matter of shame.

Paul did not blush to tell, it is for the gospel he is in bonds. The shame belonged to them that clapped on the chain, not to him that wore it. The thief, the murderer, may justly blush to tell wherefore they suffer, not the Christian for well-doing: *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God on this behalf,* 2 Pet. iv. 16. Christ himself having counted it no dishonour to have the print of his wounds seen after his resurrection. Babylas, a Christian myrtyr, would have his chain buried with him. *The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name,* Acts v. 41. And

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if it be no shame to suffer for the gospel, then surely it is none to profess it, and live up to its holy rules: shall the wicked glory in their shame, and thou be ashamed of thy glory? Shall they do the devil's work at noon-day-light, and thou afraid to be seen to be good? Yet Salvian tells us, in his days, (so wicked they were, and such a scorn was cast upon holiness) that many carried Christ's colours in their pocket, and concealed their piety, *ne viles haberentur*, lest they should be counted vile and base.

SECT. V.—Note 5. Fifthly, and lastly, Observe the end why he makes known his sufferings.

First, That they may know the true cause wherefore he suffered.

Paul's enemies laid heavy things to his charge, and these might haply fly as far as Ephesus. When the saints are in a suffering condition, satan is very industrious to defame them, and misrepresent the cause of their troubles to the world, as if it were for no good. Now, though Paul regarded little what the wicked world said of him, yet he desired to stand right in the thoughts of the churches, and therefore acquaints them with the cause of his imprisonment.

Secondly, To strengthen their faith and comfort their hearts.

No doubt but Paul's chain entered into their souls, and his suffering was their sorrow. This he knew, and therefore sends them word by Tychicus (the bearer of this epistle) how it fared with him in his bonds, that they might not spend too many tears for him, who had a heart so merry and chearful in his sufferings, ver. 22. *That ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.* Thus have we seen sometimes a tender-hearted father on his sick-bed, not so much troubled with his own pains, or thoughts of his approaching death, as to see his children take them so much to heart; and therefore, forgetting his own miseries, addresseth himself with a smiling countenance to comfort them.

O it is an excellent sight to behold the saints that are at liberty mourning over their afflicted brethren, and those that are the sufferers, become comforters to them that are at liberty. Never doth religion appear more glorious, than when they commend it who are suffering for it: And no way can they commend it higher, than by a holy, humble chearfulness of spirit in their sufferings. The comfortable letters which the martyrs in Queen Mary's days sent out of prison, did wonderfully strengthen their brethren throughout the kingdom, and fit them for the prison.—Sufferers may preach with great advantage above others. They do not speak by hear-say, but what they experience in themselves.

3. To enagage their prayers for him.

Suffering

Suffering saints have ever been covetous of prayers. Paul sets all the churches at work for him. *Pray, pray, pray*, was the usual close of Mr Bradford's letters out of prison: And great reason for it; for a suffering condition is full of temptations.—When man plays the persecutor, the devil forgets not to be a tempter. He that followed Christ into the wilderness, will find a way to get to his saints in the prison. Sometimes he will try whether he can soften them for impressions of fear, or make them pity themselves, and he shall not want them that will lend their tears to melt their courage, and weaken their resolution: May be wife and children, or friends and neighbours, who wish them well, but are abused by satan to lay a snare before them, while they express their affection to them. No doubt these good people meant well to Paul, who with tears and passionate entreaties endeavoured to keep him from Jerusalem, (where it was foretold he should come into trouble) but satan had a design against Paul therein, who hoped they might not only break his heart, but weaken his courage, with their tears. When he cannot make a coward of the saint, to run from the cross, then he will try to sour and swell his spirit with some secret anger against those that laid it on.

O it is no easy matter to receive evil, and wish none to him from whose hands we have it. To reserve love for him that shews wrath and hatred to us, is a glorious, but a difficult work. If he cannot leaven him with wrath against his persecutor, then he will try to blow him up with a high conceit of himself, who dares suffer for Christ while others shrink in their heads, and seek to keep themselves safe within their own shell. O this pride is a salamander that can live in the fire of suffering! If any one saint needs the humility of many saints, it is he that is called to suffer: To glory in his sufferings for Christ, becomes him well, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Gal. vi. 14. But to glory in himself for them, is hateful and odious. Needs not he a quick eye, and a steady hand, that is to drive his chariot on the brow of so dangerous a precipice?

In a word, As a suffering condition is full of temptations, so the saints strength to carry himself through is not in his own keeping.

God must help, or the stoutest champion's spirit will soon quail: *In all things I am instructed; both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need*, Phil. iv. 12. This was a hard lesson indeed to learn: Who was his master? See ver. 13. *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.* Now as the saints strength to suffer is not in themselves, but Christ, so prayer is the best means to fetch it in for their help; for by it they confess their own weakness, and so God is secured from

from having a co-rival in the praise; which Paul is here free to do, and more than so: For as he confesseth he can do nothing without Christ's strength, to enable and embolden him, so he dares not rely on his own solitary single prayers for the obtaining it, but calls in the auxiliary forces of his fellow saints to besiege heaven for him: that while he is in the valley, suffering for the gospel, they may be lifting up their hands and hearts in the mount of prayer for him.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

EXTRACT

FROM

Mr. ISAAC AMBROSE's

WAR WITH DEVILS.

Of Satan's temptation to Pride.

SOME men are naturally and by disposition prone to pride: not that any are free, but some are more prone than others. Indeed there is a great dispute, which is the master-sin in every man? No question, as we have said, in every man is some one sin which carries one one way, another another way: and this sin, whatsoever it is, ariseth from complexion, education, condition, and other causes and occasions, which often varies, as the temper of our bodies, and the order of our estate doth change. Hence this year it is one sin, and seven years hence (as every seventh year there is a sensible change in the humours of the body) it is another sin. But that sin of all sins, which runs through all ages, and through all the race of mankind, is pride; and in this respect, this is the captain-sin, the most general and universal sin in all the world. Unbelief may have that name, and be well called our master-sin in respect of justification; but the chief sin, which is our greatest moral vice, and carries continually the greatest power with it in respect of sanctification, is the sin of pride. All other sins do a kind of homage to pride, as to their king and lord.—Other sins that (we speaking from feeling) do call our master-sins, are made use of by God to humble his saints, and to eat out this sin: and therefore this sin of pride is in that respect also the chiefest sin. As we see in trees there is a master root, so in original sin, the master-root is pride; and therefore God, who resists all other sins, is said especially to *resist this sin afar off*, Psal.

Psal. cxxxviii. 6. He cannot abide the sight of it. Now satan, that knows this full well, labours with might and main to provoke all men to this sin; it was his own sin, the very sin that made him of a blessed angel a cursed devil, and therefore he chiefly labours to derive this sin to all the sons of men. And indeed he so far prevailed upon our first parents by telling them, *Ye shall be as gods*, Gen. iii. 5. that ever since this sin hath claimed a kind of regency in the hearts of all: as we are sinful, so we are all proud, all would be flattered to an esteem of themselves: *Ye shall be as gods*, is a temptation to all sorts of men. Hence we say, Pride is a weed that grows in every ground, yea in humility itself. Do we not see men pretend to humility for their greater rise in the world? What hardships will men and women endure for this very sin? Witness naked breasts, and naked arms, and naked shoulders. We all hold of Adam *in capite*; pride was the first and great sin in Adam, and so it is in all his seed; we had this lust from him, and he had this lust from the angels. O the pride of angels! it gave them their fall; and O the pride of Adam! it gave him his fall; and O the pride that is in us! And therefore, without repentance, we may also perish by this epidemical sin.

Of our wrestling with Satan to overcome this sin, in some particulars.

THAT by God's grace we may be able to wrestle with satan and this sin, we may do well to observe some things in particular, and then deal with it in general.

I. In particular. Pride is either conversant about carnal objects, as pride of beauty, strength, riches, apparel, &c. or about spiritual objects, as pride of gifts, graces, privileges. I shall speak to both these.

1. For the former, as the objects are several, so in respect of them severally, consider thus:

1. For beauty: consider thy beauty is but skin-deep; and never was any so beautiful, but the flowers of the field, such as the rose and lily, do in beauty of colours go beyond them. This made the wise man say, *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised*, Prov. xxxi. 30. That is the true comeliness, and best beauty, which a picture cannot express. 'Art thou fair and beautiful,' (saith Chrysostom), 'why this is the glory of daws, and not of men; 'thou art not fairer than the peacock or the swan: do we not see harlots and effeminate men have a great share in this glory?' Besides,

sides, what loathsome matter lieth hid under this fair skin? what filthy excrements are they that issue out of the nose, eyes and ears, and pores, and other passages? If the fountain within were but viewed whence all these come, how might this humble thee? I may add, this ill of beauty it is used most frequently by the devil most ordinarily for a bait of sin; it is a shining flame to set mens hearts on fire with unlawful lusts. But if there were nothing else, alas! to what purpose art thou proud of a thing so mutable? a little scratch impaireth it, and a greater wound doth quite deform it; a day's sickness doth much abate it, or if it be but of a week's continuance, it doth quite deface it; yea, so fading is it, that a little sun shine robbeth us of it; or if it be preserved from the violence of extraordinary accidents, yet time will by little and little steal it away. When old age cometh, it ploughs deep furrows in the most beautiful visage, it changeth the colour; and when death comes, the most amiable countenance will be so deformed, that they who most admired it, will then loath it. Oh that thou wouldst turn the edge of thy affections from this earthly trash to spiritual and heavenly beauty! oh that thou wouldst mind the beauty of the mind, which consists in virtue, and the sanctifying graces of God's spirit! Old age shall never make any wrinkles in the face of this, sickness shall never hurt this, violence shall not deface this, grief and sorrow shall not impair this, death itself shall not blemish or disgrace this, but rather it shall crown this beauty of grace with the beauty of glory.

2. For strength: consider, this is common to men and beasts; how vain is it therefore, that any should be proud of such base vanities? 'Art though strong,' (saith Chrysostom), 'and art thou 'therefore proud? Why, the lion is hardier than thou; and the 'boar is stronger than thou; yea, robbers, thieves, ruffians, and 'thy own servants, excel thee herein; and dost thou think this a 'thing praise-worthy?' Thou art strong, but can this deliver thee from those innumerable dangers unto which this frail life is daily subject? *The king is not saved by the multitude of an host, neither is the mighty man delivered by his great strength*, Psal. xxxiii. 16. It can neither defend thee from the judgments of God, nor from the assaults of the devil; it can neither deliver thee from sickness nor death. Oh that thou wouldst *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, Eph. 6, 10, 11. *Oh that thou wouldst put on the whole armour of God, that thou mightest be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*, Phil. iv. 13. Why, this is strength to some purpose, hereby thou mightest stand manfully in the day of battle against all the assaults of thy spiritual enemies: bodily strength without this is little worth. Oh! what will become of thee in the day of trial?

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3. For riches; consider, thy riches will not avail thee in the day of the Lord's fierce wrath; what is a fat portion to a lean soul? Outward things never mend us, but often worsen us. For a man to be proud of riches, it is as if a horse should be proud of his trappings. Thy riches are but thorns, which, unless a man hold warily, he is sure to be pricked. Hence are so many epithets of riches in scripture, that they may wean our affections from priding in them, as the *Mammon of unrighteousness*, *the riches of the world*, *the deceitfulness of riches*, Luke xvi. 6. 1 Tim. vi. 17. Mat. xiii. 22. Augustine adds, 'That they are 'an evil-master, a treacherous servant, fathers of flattery, sons of 'grief, a cause of fear to those that have them, and a cause of "sorrow to those that want them.' Oh that men, Christians, professors of religion, should ever be choaked with these thorns, or entangled with these snares, or especially be overtaken with pride of such sordid, carnal, worldly things!

4. For apparel; consider that this was the effect of sin. Had our first parents continued in their state of innocency, they had remained glorious in themselves; but sin brought shame, and this shame they would cover by the help of garments. What then is our apparel, but a daily monitor to call our sin and shame to remembrance? Oh that men should vaunt themselves in this vanity! As if a thief, being adjudged to wear a halter for his crimes, should make him one of silk, or golden twist; and because it glitters, should presently grow proud of that, which indeed should humble him. Why, our apparel is the very sign of our sin; and shall we convert that which is given us to hide our sin, into sin itself? Before Adam sinned, the most glorious garment would have been to him as a cloud to the sun; and after Adam sinned (to put him in mind of his sin and shame), God clothed him not with silks or velvets, curiously embroidered with gold and silver, but with beasts' skins. Surely this was to humble him, and not to puff him up with pride; this was to mind him of his brutish condition, yea, of his frailty and mortality, seeing the creatures for his sake were already subject to death and vanity. Oh that thou wouldst mind the word, which bids thee array thyself with *shamefacedness and modesty, and not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly apparel,* 1 Tim. ii. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 3. Oh that thou wouldst consider thyself as a pilgrim upon the earth, and therefore thou shouldst not go as a citizen or courtier of this world! Oh that as a nobleman would be ashamed to borrow clothes of a beggar, so thou wouldst rather be ashamed than glory in the ornaments which thou borrowest from inferior creatures, as from one his fleece, from another his skin, and from another his feathers, from another his bones, and from another his entrails, excrements, what not? Why, alas! beasts and birds,

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and silly worms, have the first title, and most natural interest to all thou wearest; and thou comest to it only by conquest, violence, and force of arms! Oh that thou wouldst remember, that thy gay apparel doth not make the more religious, humble, just, temperate; it doth not abate thy pride, but rather increaseth it; it doth not extinguish the heart of lust, but rather inflames it; it doth not warm thy heart with charity, nor expel the force of satan's darts, but rather causeth thy love to freeze, and lays open thy soul to satan's blows! A vicious man, adorned with glorious garments, is like a dead corpse stuck with flowers, or like the stately temples of Egypt, which had the outward courts, porches, walls, and roofs richly adorned with gold and silver, and curious carving and engraving, but if a man went into the inmost parts to see the idol which was there worshipped, instead of some stately image set out according to the rest of the bravery and pomp, he could find nothing but the base picture or resemblance of some cat, crocodile, or ugly serpent. These men who load themselves with costly apparel, if this outward glory were but removed, and they more narrowly searched into the inmost temple of their hearts, instead of God's image shining in its spiritual graces, we should find perhaps crocodiles and serpents, lusts, and pride, and wantonness, immodesty, and such like sins. Oh that men professing mortification should ever be thus vain!

2. For the other objects of pride, as they are more spiritual, so it concerns Christians to be more heedful. A mere natural man is proud of his beauty, strength, riches, apparel, or the like; but a Christian is chiefly prone to be puffed up with higher and more raised perfections, as being more suitable to his Christian calling. Now as these objects are several, so in respect of them severally, consider thus:

1. For gifts; consider, these gifts are not thy own, but God's; and not for thyself, but for others' edifying; and one day thou must make a reckoning for them all: and what! art thou proud of another's bounty given on these terms? Suppose a man should leave a chest of money in thy hands, to be distributed to others, what folly were it to put it into thy own inventory? Bernard was much troubled with this temptation, when even in preaching pride would be whispering in his ear, *Bene fecisti, Bernarde;* 'O well done, Bernard.' But he was humbled for this in the midst of his sermon: being interrupted by satan, he turned to him, and spake these words, *Non propter te hoc opus cœptum est, non propter te, nec in te finietur:* 'This sermon was not begun for thee, nor shall it end in thee.' Pride is a worm bred in the rose, and the more parts men have, the more doth this disease increase. But oh, consider that of the apostle; *What hast thou that thou hast not received? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost*

dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor. iv. 7.—Matthew Paris relates of a great scholar, much admired for his learning, that in his lectures once in the schools, proving the divine and human nature of Christ with applause, he most arrogantly said, 'That Christ was beholden to him for that dispute; and 'that he owed, as it were, his divine nature to his learning:' upon which blasphemy, he was immediately stricken with ignorance, and such sottishness, that he was afterwards taught the Lord's prayer by a little child. Oh that men should ever pride themselves about notions and apprehensions! Oh that men should forget the account they must give and make of every talent! It may be thou hast a great measure of gifts: Oh take heed! for if thou dost unprofitably bury them, or abuse them unto sin, the greater and more fearful shall thy condemnation be; *The servant that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, Luke xii. 47.

2. For graces; consider, they will not justify, they cannot save; why then art thou proud of thy own righteousness? Those who have had more to shew than thyself, have thrown away all, and gone a-begging to Jesus Christ. Read Paul's inventory: *Though I might have confidence in the flesh, if any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee, concerning zeal persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.* And what of all this? why, all this was nothing; *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them as dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 4—9. I am not against graces and gracious actings, but I am against pride in them, or trusting to them; certainly grace will never thrive this way. Gurnall observes, 'That some have been a long time professors, and yet 'come but to a little growth in love to God, humility, heavenly-'mindedness, mortification: and it is worth the digging to see 'what lies at the root of their profession, whether there be not 'a legal principle that hath too much acted them; did they not 'think to carry all with God from their duties, services, graces, 'or gracious actings? Alas! this is as so much dead earth, which 'must be thrown out, and gospel principles be laid in the room 'thereof.' Methinks I am in this taken with the author, and therefore hearken to his advice, try but this course, and see whe-

ther the spring of thy grace will not come on apace. David gives an account how he came to stand and flourish, when some that were rich and mighty on a sudden withered, and came to nothing: *Lo! this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches; but I am like a green olive tree in the house of God, I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever*, Psalm lii. 7, 8. Whilst others trust in the riches of their righteousness and service, and make not Christ their strength, do thou renounce all, and trust only in the mercy of God in Christ, and then thou shalt be *like a green olive tree in the house of God.*

5. For privileges, such as spiritual comforts, sense of pardon, manifestations of God's love, &c. consider, these were given (if ever they were given) to humble thee, and not to make thee proud. It is true, that in the best of saints, there remains such dregs of corruption unpurged, that the devil often makes these privileges an occasion of pride; and indeed, the Lord lets us see our proneness to this sin, by the short stay he usually makes, when he comes in with any such discoveries. A short interview with heaven now and then chears up a Christian, who, had he but a constant shine, would forget himself, and grow wanton. Was not Paul in danger of pride from his short rapture? but therefore it was but short, and God gave him a prick in the flesh to keep him down. If ever comfort abounds, and God dandles thee on the knee of his love, take heed then of this sin of pride; it is God's meaning by this, to chear thee a little, but then to humble thee, and not to puff thee up. As when he gave manna to Israel in the wilderness, it was not to swell them, but to humble them, *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee*, Deut. viii. 16.; so when God gives us his spiritual comforts, his end is, and his meaning is, to humble thee. How can that be? why, if not in the gift, yet in the manner of his giving it, thou mayest see it. If the Israelites could not see any thing in the manna to humble them, for it was not mean food, but delicious food, called *angels'-food*, Psal. lxxviii. 23. yet in the manner of dispensing it from hand to mouth, in giving them every day their portion, and no more, in keeping the key of their cup-board (as one speaks), and making them to stand to his immediate allowance, in this they might know that his purpose was to humble them. Thy priviliges are precious and rare things: it may be thou art weak in grace, or thou art in the beginning of a Christian course; and lest thou faint in the way, the Lord is pleased sometimes to take thee up in his arms, and to give thee the kisses of his mouth, but presently he lets thee down again, and makes thee feel thy feet in the ordinary way of duties, and his very cherishing thee is to humble thee. Dost thou not see thy weakness, by his carrying of thee in his arms? Weak children

children are oftener in the mother's lap than those that are strong; and it is but a while, a very little while, that he thus deals with thee. Oh, then take heed of pride! lest he send thee a prick in the flesh to let thee blood, or a devil out of hell to buffet thee soundly for thy pride: if he thus dealt with Paul, how much more may he thus deal with thee? Oh, consider of this!

Of our wrestling with Satan in general, to overcome this sin.

BUT as thus I have dealt with some particulars, so I would propound some general rules, which may differently serve for every latitude, meridian, or elevation of pride. As,

1. Press into God's presence: consider of God's greatness, purity, holiness, perfection, majesty. A sight of his glory were enough to humble thee, and cast thee down into a depth of dragons. To this purpose we are called on, *to humble ourselves in the sight of God*, Lam. iii. 10. A sight of God is it that makes the creature shrink into nothing. *Now mine eye seeth thee*, (saith Job) *wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. 6. This made Elisha *to wrap his face in a mantle*, 1 Kings xix. 13. this made the angels cover their faces and feet; this made the *twenty-four elders to cast their crowns before the throne of the Lamb*, Rev. iv. 10. Nothing will more pluck the plumes of pride than a serious view of the glory of God; as the stars vanish when the sun appeareth, so will our poor candle, when the glory of God ariseth in our thoughts.—Come then, look on him, and be humbled, that a creature so vile (as thou wilt then appear) should ever be proud: *Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*, Isa. vi. 5.

2. Note that sin especially, which all thy life long hath been of most infamy, and dwell upon it. David once fell into foul adultery, and therefore he cried, *My sin is ever before me*, Psal. li. 3. It kept him very low; 'Lord my heart is not 'haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in 'great matters, nor things too high for me. I am even as a child 'that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child,' Psal. cxxxi. 1.

2. Paul was once a persecutor, and injurious; and therefore he cries, 'O I am the least of saints, and the greatest of sinners.' 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acception, that Christ 'Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,' 1 Tim. i. 15. Men are proud because they know not themselves;

when Augur had but studied himself, he cries, 'Surely I am more 'brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of a man,' Prov. xxx. 2. If we would but examine ourselves, and call to mind our foulest sins, and most irregular practices, these would be as the peacock's feet to pull down our plumes. O! who could be proud, whilst he were raking in the filth of his most noisome lusts?

3. Observe God's judgments on pride, either on thyself or others. Nebuchadnezzar's pride 'made his heart like the wild 'beasts, so that his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed 'him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of 'heaven.' And as on him, so God's judgments fell on his son; for it so follows, 'And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not 'humbled thine heart, though thou knowest all this, but hast 'lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven;' and therefore God sent the writing, *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN*, Dan. v. 21, 22, 23. 25. Are not these terrible expressions? 'With God is terrible majesty,' saith Job, chap. xxxvii. 22. 'He shall cut off the spirit of princes,' saith David, 'he is ter-'rible to the kings of the earth,' Psal. lxxvi. 12. 'He cuts off 'the spirits which are proud;' in Hebrew, he 'slips them off, as one would slip off a flower between his fingers: and thus he dealt with Pharoah, Antiochus, Herod, and other proud tyrants.—Attilas, king of the Hunns, proudly gave out, that the stars fell before him, and the earth trembled at his presence, and that he would be the scourge of all nations; but shortly after he died by a flux of blood breaking out at his mouth, which choaked him on his wedding-day.

4. Look unto Jesus, and conform to him; yea, by faith draw out the spiritual virtue of an humble Christ. Christ's example is not only directive, but full of virtue; the very hem of his garment, believingly touched, would cure this bloody issue. Was not this Christ's own lesson? 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls,' Mat. ix. 29. Q. d. 'Learn of me, for I am lowly:' I am sent by God the Father into the world; and this is one special end that I am sent into the world for; I am appointed as a great ordinance of God the Father to hold forth this, and therefore look on me, and be ye lowly, as 'I am lowly.' Surely good reason we should be as he was, lowly as he was lowly, and humble as he was humble.—When Rebekah came to Isaac, and she saw him walking in the field, and asked the servant who it was, and he said it was his master's son: presently Rebekah lighted down, and goes on her feet, she would be as he was; he walked, and Rebekah would walk too. It is good reason that the spouse of Christ should be lowly as Christ: 'And therefore,' saith Christ, 'learn of me, 'look

'look on me, write after me, let the same mind be in you which 'was in me.' Every christian is united to Jesus Christ, and and should be acted by the same spirit that Christ is. 'Let this 'mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in 'the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, 'but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form 'of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being 'found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,' Phil. ii. 5——8. Now let this mind be in you: as pride is the resemblance of the devil, which brought him to ruin, so humility is the resemblance of Jesus Christ, which brought him to honour. O then let this mind be in you, which was in Christ! Look at him in all the particular acts of his humility, and by faith draw virtue out of all these acts.

5. Let every act of pride be accompanied with a subsequent act of humiliation. If thou canst not prevent this sin of pride, yet check it as soon as ever it ariseth. This was Hezekiah's course: after he was sick, and restored to health, he forgot himself, 'and rendered not according to the benefit done unto him, 'for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him, 'and upon Judah and Jerusalem: notwithstanding Hezekiah 'humbled himself, for the pride of his heart, (both he and the 'inhabitants of Jerusalem), so that the wrath of the Lord came 'not upon them in the days of Hezekiah,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 24.——26. It is high time to be humbled, and ly low, when thou hast committed such a sin, as to provoke God to wrath. 'Hear ye, and 'give ear, be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken.——But if 'ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your 'pride,' Jer. xiii. 15. 17. If pride go before, humiliation must follow after; 'be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your 'laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness; humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up,' Lam. iv. 9, 10.

6. Treasure up some holy principles, and keep them fresh and ready in thy thoughts to quell this sin. When we would suppress weeds, we usually sow the contrary seed; so have thou at hand, and in mind, some contrary seed, some holy principles. I shall instance in these two:—

1. Pride is the forerunner of ruin: it is a proverb, as true, as commonly spoken, that 'pride goes before a fall.' Indeed Solomon in his proverbs gives that for one, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall,' Prov. xvi. 18. And therefore he pourtrayed the proud man to the life, that pictured him snatching at a crown, and falling, with this motto, 'Sic mea 'fata sequor.'

2. Humility is the way to glory; this is often inculcated by

our Saviour, 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted,' Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14. We are all by nature proud, (as we have heard), we would all be exalted, how is it then that we forget this principle, 'The way to rise is to fall?' God gave us a pattern of it in Jesus Christ. First, 'He emptied himself, and 'humbled himself to the death of the cross; wherefore God hath 'highly exalted him, and given him a name above all names,' Phil. ii. 5—9. I know not any good, but humility is a means to obtain it. Am I in trouble? and would I have deliverance? 'The Lord heareth the desires of the humble,' Psal. x. 17. Am I in a place of honour? and do I fear to fall? 'A man's pride shall bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit,' Prov. xxix. 23. Though places of advancement be slippery, yet the humble shall be upheld. Am I disconsolate? and would I see more of God, and of his favour and love? he that is in the lowest pits, sees stars in the day-time; 'The Lord will revive the spirits of the humble,' Isa. lvii. 15. Would I be advanced, not only on earth, but in heaven? 'Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same shall be great in the kingdom of heaven, Mat. xviii. 4.

O think of these principles! Pride leads to hell, but humility to heaven. It was an answer that a philosopher gave to one that asked him, What God did in heaven? 'Why,' said he, 'he is beating down the proud, and lifting up the humble.'

Of Satan's Temptations to Passion or Anger.

OTHERS are of choleric dispositions, and so prone to passion or anger, that they break all rules, both of reason and religion. Now satan, that observes their temper, puts on to make them more raging, fierce, and furious: Satan still hath a great hand and stroke in every sin; he can easily make use of our bodies, by commotion of the humours; he can stir us up to uncleanness, passion, revenge, and all other sensual lusts. Hence carnal desires are called 'his lusts,' John viii. 44. and giving place to anger, is, in the apostle's language, 'a giving place to the devil,' Eph. iv. 26, 27. Indeed the heathen, who understood not the operation of the devil, thought all our conflicts were against internal passions; but my text is clear, 'We wrestle not against them, but against principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickednesses in heavenlies.' I shall not deny, but sometimes we begin the temptation, and sometimes satan; as Zanard, speaking of the outward power of the

the devil over tempests, 'Sometimes,' said he, 'he may raise the matter; at other times, the matter being prepared, satan may adjoin himself, and make the tempest more impetuous.' And yet for all this, it must be granted, that there is a just, and harmless, and holy anger: 'Be ye angry, and sin not,' saith the apostle, Eph. iv. 26. Thus Jacob was angry, Gen. xxx. 2. and Moses was angry, Numb. xvi. 15. and Nehemiah was angry, Neh. v. 6. and Jeremiah was angry, Jer. vi. 11. and Christ himself was angry, Mark iii. 5. But this passion of anger I speak of, is that which is unjust and sinful; it is anger which gives place to the devil, it is anger which misses in object, time, measure, end, and other circumstances. Give me leave but a while to insist on these, and you will know what anger is sinful, and what anger I mean.

1. It is such an anger as misses in respect of the object. Holy anger hath a right object, as matters of reason, religion, the honour and glory of God and of Jesus Christ: but sinful anger is either exercised about nothing; thus many are angry, and they know not wherefore, 'There is a great deal of cry,' as they say, 'and but little wool;' or it is exercised about every thing. Thus every trifle, and every toy, any thing in the world that falls out in any manner against their minds, puts many into anger. Or it is exercised against some excellency that God hath bestowed upon others more than themselves. So Saul was angry with David, and Cain was angry with Abel. When tigers smell the fragrancy of spices, they are put into a rage of fury (as sometimes you have heard); so many are angry at the graces of God's spirit, which they observe in others. These, and such like, are the objects about which sinful anger is conversant.

2. It is such an anger as misses in respect of time. Holy anger is deliberate, seasonable, and short; but the anger which the devil sets on, it is,

1. Sudden and indeliberate. Thus many men and women have tinder spirits, or gun powder spirits; as soon as ever the fire comes to them, they are all in a flame. Against this, saith Solomon, 'He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly,' Prov. iv. 17. and 'Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools,' Eccl. vii. 9. From this hasty anger we call the passion of anger 'hastiness;' such a man is a hasty man, or such a woman is a hasty woman. Now this is folly, saith the wise man; 'He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he that is hasty of spirit, exalteth folly,' Prov. xiv. 17. 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath,' Jam. i. 19. Holy anger is slow, wherein it imitates God, but sinful anger is sudden.

2. It is unseasonable. Thus many are angry in the presence of others, who should not see it; or they are angry when they see others angry before them. This minds me of the counsel that one gave to a young married couple, who were both of passionate choleric spirits, that they should be sure not to be angry together; it cannot be good to add heat to fire. Or they are angry when they are about to perform a duty. This is the devil's season.—Many are angry either before sermon, or after it, or, it may be, immediately before or after prayer. To these, saith Christ, 'First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' Mat. v. 24. And of these, saith the apostle, 'I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath, 1 Tim. ii. 8. This wrath, at such a time, is an impoisoning and heavy hindrance, which clogs and clips the wings of a prayer, that it can never be able to ascend up into heaven; and therefore this anger is very unseasonable.

3. Sinful anger is constant, it abides too long, the sun goes down upon it. When the apostle said, 'Be angry and sin not,' he adds, 'Let not the sun go down on your wrath, neither give place to the devil,' Eph. iv. 26. Any man that retains his anger longer than evening, gives place to the devil. Many can say, Shall I give way to mine enemy? shall I yield to him that hath done me such and such wrong? But they little consider, that in retaining their anger, they give way to the devil, they yield to the devil. What? is it not better to yield to your brother, though your inferior, than to yield to the devil? Shall men live as if they drank no other water but of Massah and Meribah, of the waters of strife? As the church said concerning God, Jer. l. 6. 'Will he reserve his anger for ever?' so may I say of such, will they reserve their anger for ever? Surely this anger is sinful in respect of time.

3. It is such an anger as misses in respect of measure. Holy anger keeps within compass: but so doth not this, nor do I wonder; for amongst all the affections or passions of the mind, there is none more like to abound in measure than the passion of anger, it is a fiery passion, and fire, we know, is apt to exceed: how great a fire will one spark kindle?

4. It is such an anger as misses in respect of the end. Holy anger hath right aims and ends, as the glory of God, and the good if souls: but what is the end of this anger? What is it a passonate man aims at? If I may answer for him, either he aims at this, that he may satisfy a peevish spirit; or he aims at this, that he may bring others under him; or he aims at this, that he may be esteemed of others as somebody in the world; or he aims at this, that he may have his will another time. These are the chief ends of a passionate spirit. But, Oh! it is otherwise with a gracious spirit: such an one may be angry sometimes, but it is not

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to satisfy himself, but to bring things into order; it is not to subject others under him, but to bring all under God; it is not to appear somebody in the world, but that the glory of God may more appear; it is not to have his will more at another time, but that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; it is not that he may avenge himself, but that he may do good to others; never more aiming at the party's good that he is angry withal, than at the very time he is most angry. Now you may see what anger I inveigh against, and what anger it is which gives place to the devil.

Of our wrestling with Satan to overcome this Sin.

IN resisting Satan and this sin, do you wrestle thus:

1. Be you humbled for what hath been past. Were you but humbled for sin in general, it would much meeken your spirits: but were you humbled for this particular sin, in that you have been formerly so peevish and pettish, oh the good that you may get by this humiliation! is not this the way to mortify sin at the root? As when weeds are moistened at the root, then it is the time to get them up, and not when all is dry; so when the heart is humbled for this sin at the root, when the heart is bedewed with tears of repentance, and becomes soft and fleshy, which before was stony and hard; then will this sin up, or be mortified with far more ease. I lay this humiliation at the foundation of all other helps; many being convinced that such or such a thing ought not to be done, they resolve presently they will do so no more; but they bottom not their resolution upon humiliation, and so all comes to nothing, and, as the morning dew, it quickly vanisheth. O begin here, repent of sins past, of former pettishness of spirit; and upon this foundation we may comfortably hope the building may stand, notwithstanding the rain, and floods, and winds that may beat upon it.

2. Resolve, and renew your resolutions and covenants with God from day to day. It may be you find that naturally you are overcome with passion; and therefore each morning think but thus with yourselves; 'I may meet with occasion this day to disquiet my heart; I have had experience, that though the day had been fair in the morning, yet it had been foul before night.—I see I am weak; I have sometimes promised and convenanted with God against this sin, but I have been overcome again and again; I will now therefore, in the strength of Christ, resolve, that this day, whatsoever falls out, I will bear it quietly; and if I be wronged, I will implead it the next day, or the next opportunity, only this day I will retain my quiet of spirit.' Why thus would

would ye resolve, and renew your resolution from day to day, who knows but it might gain upon your hearts to overcome passion? And if a little were but done for the present, yet it would not be so hard as now it is to overcome it afterwards.

3. Set a high price upon the quietness of your spirit; 'Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife,' Prov. vii. 1. There is as much difference betwixt quietness and strife, as betwixt a stormy, dark, tempestuous night, and a calm, sweet, sun-shiny summer's day. When the apostle speaks of the 'ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' he adds, 'that in the sight of God it is of great price,' 1 Pet. iii. 4. Other graces are precious in the sight of God, but a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price, it is worth a great deal, it is a jewel of great worth. Kings, and princes, and nobles, wear jewels sometimes worth thousands of pounds; but every meek man and woman that goes up and down, though never so poor, yet they wear a pearl worth a world: thus God esteems it, and so should we also. Tell me, you that bear crosses with a quiet and meek spirit, do you not find a great deal of comfort in this quiet and meek frame? why then say, 'It shall cost me dear, but I shall keep this frame.' If a man should throw dirt at you, and you had a golden ball in your hand, would you throw that away because he throws dirt at you? What if others cast upon you reproaches, and froward words? they have no other weapons for themselves, they scarce ever knew in all their lives what the sweetness of a quiet spirit meant. Oh, but you that fear God, and whom God hath adorned with the graces of his own Spirit, do you prize a quiet spirit at an high rate, do you suffer for it; for there is much good in it.

4. Remove the occasion of anger. As Cotys king of Thrace, when one brought him curious vessels but brittle, I suppose of glass, or the like, he commended their rare workmanship, yet presently brake them, lest (being of an hasty nature) when his servants by any accident had broken them, he should have been excessively angry. When Saul cast a javelin at Jonathan to smite him, then Jonathan arose from the table, and would eat no meat in Saul's presence. It is our wisdom to get out of the company of such as have offended us, as Jonathan did, rather than sinful anger should break out. Or,

5. If the occasion cannot well be removed, then give reason leave to interpose and divert. It was good counsel which Athenodorus gave to Augustus, that when the object and occasions of choler were in his eye, he should not be moved before he had pronounced over the letters of the alphabet. When the mind is diverted, there may be some room to deliberate; and therefore in this case, divert to some other business, company, pleasant employment,

ployment, thoughts of content; these are noble coolers, and very convenient to slack this passionate fire. As physicians observe in bleeding, when a man or woman bleeds very violently at the nose, the way to staunch the blood is to let blood in another vein; so those that are passionate, they should labour to turn the channel of their affections another way. For instance, 'What? do I feel my anger stir? let me stir up fears; Oh! let me have the fear of the great God before mine eyes; or doth my anger stir? let me stir up sorrow; Oh let me grieve for their sin, whereby they have provoked God more than me: or doth my anger stir? let me stir up love, I am called on to love mine enemies, and will the heat of love take out the heat of anger? The shining of the sun upon a fire, deadens the fire: and surely the beams of love in my heart towards God, and towards his saints, and towards my enemies, should deaden or weaken this fire of passion that is so strong in me.' Thus by a wile, as it were, mayest thou subdue thy anger, if thou canst but turn thy affections another way.

6. If diversions will not do, then stand at the stave's end, and resist this sin at its first breaking out. A little thing will quench a great fire, when the fire is new kindled; but if you stay a while, then buckets of water will not do it. 'The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water,' (I may say, as when one letteth out fire); 'therefore leave off contention before it be meddled withal,' Prov. xii. 14. You are to take as great care of the beginning of anger, as you would be careful to quench a little spark of fire that is in the midst of many barrels of gun-powder: and great reason; for the fire of contention, which begins at a little, if not prevented, riseth to a great deal. Camerarius tells us a story of two brothers, who, walking out in the evening, and seeing the firmament full of spangling stars, one of them, being a grazier, wished that he had as many oxen as there were stars in the firmament; then said the other brother, 'And if I had a pasture as big as the world, where wouldst thou keep thy oxen?' He answered, 'In your pasture.' 'What,' said the other, 'whether I would or not?' 'Yes,' said his brother. The matter was very light, but it fell out very heavy; for they presently fell to words, drew upon one another, and killed one another. Do we not see many neighbours fall out about very small matters? and if some wise men, in the beginning, did but meditate between them, how easily might they be reconciled? otherwise the fire kindles to such a flame, that few or none know how to extinguish it, or make them friends.

7. Be convinced, it is much better to bear wrong, than to be sinfully angry for wrong. In bearing wrong, there is no danger of satan's hurt; but for the devil to come and tempt thee by this or that wrong, to be in a pet or angry fit, there lies the danger.

It

It is Austin's expression, 'When the fowler hath set a net to catch fowls, then he comes and throws stones in the hedges, to fright the birds out; so when the devil hath set his nets and temptations, to catch poor souls in, then he sets others on to do them wrong, that so he may take them in his net.' O take heed now of anger! take heed of the net that the devil hath on the other side of the hedge; it is better to suffer wrong from another, than to suffer sin in thy own soul. 'But how must I do if I be injured?' I answer, 1. Look on God, and consider all thy wrongs and unworthy usages are ordered by God for thy everlasting good. This very one thought, that God is the principal agent, kept fresh and on foot in thy mind, will be of sovereign power to cool and beat back any intemperate anger, yea, and make thee say to God, with David, 'I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,' Psal. xxxix. 9. Thus Joseph looked beyond his brethren's barbarous dealings with him, and said, 'The Lord sent me before you.' Thus Job looked beyond the Chaldeans' lawless outrages, and said, 'The Lord hath taken away.' Thus David looked beyond Shimei's dogged rancour, and said, 'The Lord hath bidden him to curse.' Thus Jesus Christ himself, blessed for ever, looked beyond the pharisees, priests, Jews, Judas, and the soldiers, to his Father's cup; 'This cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?' In case of injuries, say thus in thyself, 'This is from God for my good;' as sometimes old Eli said, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' 2. Look on man, and make the best construction thou canst of any wrong done by him: if the party that hath wronged thee be a young man, impute it to his rashness, and want of experience; if he be an old man, impute it to his weakness, 'senes bis pueri,' old men are twice children; he might do thee wrong, and yet mean thee no harm; if he be a good man, impute it to some mistake, for certainly he would not purposely do thee any evil; if he be a wicked man, impute it to the enmity betwixt the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; if he do thee harm, say, it is no more than thou expectedst from him. If thus thou wouldst make the best construction of every thing, how mightest thou overcome passion, and procure to thyself a great deal of peace and patience all thy life long?

8. Take unto you 'the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God,' Ephes. vi. 17. Satan provokes men, that they may be provoked: he would have them yield to anger, and then they yield to him. But, that you may wrestle and prevail, take up your weapons, have your sword (which is the word of God) in your hands and heart. It is the sword that slays corruptions, and satanical temptations, as David said of Goliah's sword, *There is none to that*, 1 Sam. xxi. 9. so that we may say of the sword of the

the spirit, 'There is none to it.' If you ask, How may I furnish myself with this weapon? or how may I cut asunder by this sword this temptation of anger? I answer,

1. Observe the temptation. Satan usually comes in with many motions or objections, and so puts on to wrath, or makes apologies for wrath. Now these, in the first place, we must observe.

2. Seek out a suitable word, and with that answer him, as Christ answered, saying, *Avoid Satan; for thus it is written.*— I shall name two; for they are main points.

Object. 1. Satan in thee objects, 'Yea, hath God said, that *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*, Mat. v. 22. Why alas! is it not but one sin, and is it not a little one? It may be thou art passionate, but thou failest only in this. Hark but what others say of thee, such a man is a very good man, only he is of an hasty spirit; or such a woman is a very gracious woman, only she is of an hasty spirit. So they say, and so I say, thou mayest be angry and godly, hasty and holy, and therefore sin on.

Answ. How? angry and godly? hasty and holy? Surely if this anger be ordinary, constant, and reigning, they are not consistent. Oh what need have I to look to my evidence! The word saith, *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*, Gal. v. 24. And what are those affections and lusts, but, among the rest, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife? Now if these be not crucified, if these be not in some good measure mortified, how should I be good, or gracious, or godly, or holy? This is certain, when grace comes into the heart, it works a change, and a new frame of spirit. The word saith, *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them*, Isa. xi. 6. The meaning is, that furious spirits shall then become weak, and hasty spirits shall then become gentle, grace will tame men; those that were in disposition like wild beasts, and hurtful creatures, shall by his powerful work be metamorphosed, and become meek and harmless. And doth satan tell me, I may be gracious and peevish! would he flatter me, that a constant ordinary reigning passionate spirit may consist with the truth of grace? Avoid satan; for it is written, this lust must be mortified, my lion-like nature must become lamb-like, or I cannot be saved.

Object. 2. But satan puts in thee another plea, and tells thee, 'That if thou art angry, thou art thereto provoked, thou couldst live quietly enough in thy family, and amongst thy neighbours, if thou wert not provoked; it is their fault that provoke thee, and not thine, that thou art thus angry with them.'

Answ.

Ans. How? am I angry? and may I be angry, because I am provoked? what a reason is this? I would rather say, that God now calls on me for meekness, and not for anger: any one can be meek when they are not provoked (as they say, 'the devil is good when he is well pleased'), but if I am provoked, then is the season, if ever, to exercise meekness. The word saith, that a *godly man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season,* Psal. i. 3. It is the excellency of grace to work in due season, for then is every thing beautiful; and when is the due season of meekness, but only when I am provoked? Or, if this be a plea, why might it not be Moses' plea, as well as thine? The word saith, *They angered him at the waters of strife, they provoked his spirit so, that he spake unadvisedly with his lips,* Psal. cvi. 33. Meek Moses is now angry, and he was provoked unto it, but that will not excuse him before God; for the word saith, *It went ill with Moses for their sakes.* God would never be intreated to let him go into the land of Canaan for this very sin: and therefore avoid satan; for it is written, If I am provoked, then is the season for meekness; for if I am provoked to anger, it will go ill with me, as it went ill with Moses, and no provocation will be my excuse.

But satan hath thousands of pleas, and ten thousands of ways, either to put thee into passion, or to justify thee in it. It is impossible for me to instance in all, but against them all I would have thee lay up and make use of several scriptures; turn them down in thy book, or learn them by heart (as we say), that thou mayest still have them in readiness; they are such as these: 'Pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate—They that are of a froward heart, are an abomination to the Lord; but such as are upright in their way, are his delight'—'Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any ways to do evil'—'Ye have heard it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire'—'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' Prov. viii. 13. and xi. 20. Psal. xxxvii. 8. Mat. v. 21, 22. Eph. iv. 31, 32. Are not these scriptures as so many swords? why then, wield them, and in the use of them cut asunder all temptations of satan.

9. Set before thee the example of Christ, till thou findest it to work upon and to change thy spirit. Christ's example, if rightly eyed and improved, doth not only work morally, but efficaciously, and by way of efficacy. It is reported of a noble Earl, Elstarius, that

that he had such a quiet spirit, that all wondered; his wife and others asked him, how he came to that meek, humble, and quiet frame? To whom he answered thus, 'When any one wrongs me,' said he, 'I presently turn my thoughts to the injuries which Je-'sus Christ suffered; and I never leave off ruminating and re-'membering the injuries of Christ until I find my heart wholly 'quiet.' *Learn of me*, said Christ, *for I am meek*, Mat. xi. 29. Christians, according to the example of Jesus Christ, ought to be meek ones: indeed, meekness is that evangelical grace that Christians ought to imitate Jesus Christ in; and therefore, *Learn of me*, saith Christ, set me before you; learn, and never cease learning, till of that fulness that is in me, you receive grace for grace, even meekness for meekness.

10. Pray constantly, in this, as in other like cases; pray down the sin of anger, pray for a spirit of meekness, intreat the Lord to quiet and sweeten thy froward nature; pray also for heavenly-mindedness, and thou wilt not be disquieted with worldly troubles. As the upper region of the air is not molested with wind, rain, hail, &c. so neither is an heavenly-minded Christian, who is lifted up far above these sublunary things, afflicted with them, or peevish for them. Pray also for faith, that thou mayest roll thyself upon him and his promises, who hath said, that *all things shall work together for their good who love God, and are called according to his purpose*, Rom. viii. 21. Why then shouldst thou be angry, seeing God will turn the injuries of men into blessings and mercies? *Let him alone, and let him curse; it may be the Lord will look on thine affliction, and that the Lord will requite good for his cursing this day*, 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12. Pray also for love, which is of more force to restrain thee from revenge than any injury to provoke thee to anger; for *love suffers long, yea, love suffers all things*, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. 7. It will make thee to look upon him with whom thou art angry as a brother, and therefore forgive him, as thou wouldst have God to forgive thee: it will make thee to meditate on the unbounded mercy of God, whose virtues thou must imitate if thou art his child; he forgives thee, and he forgives thy enemies their many sins, and canst not thou forgive them? Thou standest in need of infinite mercy to wash away thy many foul offences, and wilt thou not let one drop of mercy fall upon thy brother to forgive him in some trifling wrongs? O pray for love, and pray for patience, and pray for the assistance of God's spirit to mortify thy anger, and to sanctify thy nature, that thou mayest be serviceable to God's glory, the good of thy brethren, and the furtherance of thy own salvation in Jesus Christ.

Of

Of Temptations in respect of our Outward Conditions.

HITHERTO of temptations in respect of our natural dispositions; the next have a respect to our outward conditions. Now, thus we are either in prosperity or adversity. If we are in prosperity, then satan tempts us to those sins whereto that state is most subject, as to forgetfulness of God, contempt of our poor brethren, love of the world, pride, &c. If we are in adversity, then he tempts us to the use of unlawful means for the repairing of our estates, or to distrusting in God, or to stealing, defrauding, murmuring, repining, what not? I cannot insist on all these particulars, for I intend brevity; only I shall mention one assault in reference to prosperity, and another as to adversity, and then have done with this head.

Of Satan's Assaults of Contemning our Brethren.

IF we are in prosperity, it is one assault of satan, and it is our common sin, to contemn our brethren. The very case of the Corinthians, who in their love-feasts carried it so unequally, that *one was hungry*, to wit, the poor; *and another was drunken*, to wit, the rich. This made the apostle to ask them, *What? have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?* 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22. In the original, *them that are poor.* The very case also of the Christian Jews in general; and therefore, saith James, in his general epistle to them, *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons: for if there come unto your assembly a man with a golden ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and ye say to him, Sit thou here in a good place; but ye say to the poor, Stand thou here, or sit under my footstool; are ye not partial in yourselves, and judges of evil thoughts?* James xii. 3, 4. I shall not deny, but that there is a holy and warrantable respect of persons, in respect of their age, calling, gifts, greatness in the world: but when great reverence is shewn to the rich, and our poor brethren are under contempt, as if they were unworthy of our company and converse; when we go so far as to esteem the wicked rich, above the godly poor, when once we so debase the godly poor, that we consider them not at all according to their eminency in grace,

grace, and high station in Christianity, but we pass by the appearance of God in them, without any mark of notice; surely this is a sin, and this is a temptation of satan. Can it be of any thing that is good, that a respect should be had to worldly lustre rather than to spiritual grace? That a gold ring should be preferred before a rich faith, doth this savour of Christianity? or rather, doth it not savour of the order of these principalities, and powers, and rulers, and spiritual wickednesses here in my text? I believe that devils do this, in opposition to God and his ways; they despise the poor, and prefer the rich; but 'hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?' Jam. ii. v. God and the devil are as contrary as may be; God hath respect to the lowliness of his hand-maiden; he exalteth them of low degree, he filleth the hungry with good things, and the rich he sendeth empty away, Luke i. 48, 49. But satan prefers wicked worldlings; and accordingly tempts others to exalt, advance, and honour them, whilst the godly poor must be neglected, contemned, depressed, and it may be persecuted, because of their outward despicableness. To this sin are they most prone, that are great and rich, and prosper in this world: what care they for the image of God shining in mean Christians? If they be not of their rank, they will scarce look on them as men, much less as godly, and, as David calls them, *the excellent of the earth*, Psal. xvi. 3.

Of our Wrestling with Satan in this respect.

IF this be one of satan's stratagems for the upsetting and upholding of his own kingdom, then you whom God hath blessed with outward estates, it concerns you to arm yourselves against this temptation, and to wrestle thus:

1. Honour them that fear God, be they never so poor: are they not the glory of God, the treasure of God, the portion of God, the peculiar people of God? And what? are you ashamed of them who are gracious, because they are outwardly mean? What is this, but to be ashamed of Christ himself? He was poor in the world, and he preached the gospel to the poor, and he accounts of the poor as his members, and at the last day he will acknowledge that what is done to the poor, it is all one as if done to himself. O then be not ashamed of them, as you would not have Christ to be ashamed of you at the last day. Men are willing enough to own their treasure: I must tell you, that the godly poor are the church's treasure, and upon that account who would

not own them? I remember, when Laurence was to suffer martyrdom, the tyrant that persecuted him, understanding him to be a deacon of the church, and so a distributor of the church's riches, he promised to himself a double prey by the apprehension of one single silly soul: thereupon he demanded of Laurence where was the substance of the church? Laurence, craving three days' respite, he promised to declare to him where the treasure might be had: in the mean time he caused a number of poor Christians to be got together; when the day of his answer was come, the persecutor strictly charged him to stand to his promise; then valiant Laurence stretched out his arms over the poor, and said, 'These are the precious treasures of the church, these are 'the treasures indeed, in whom the faith of Christ reigneth, in 'whom Christ hath his mansion-place. What more precious 'jewels can Christ have, than those in whom he hath promised 'to dwell!' for so it is written, *I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink*, &c.; *and look, what ye have done to one of those, the same ye have done to me.* Indeed this answer vexed the tyrant; but the poor martyr stood to it, though he died for it a most cruel death. O do ye own them who are godly poor? now for shame be not you ashamed of them.

2. Close with them, vouchsafe to be much in their society: this was the apostle's rule, *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate*, Rom. xii. 16. Jerome, in his epistle to Pamachius, bade him to 'equal himself with the poor, and now 'and then to go into the cells of the needy.' I can easily observe how the rich associate themselves with the rich; and many times with the poor or inferior sort of men, but they are with the most vile, profane, and debauched of all the poor in the country. In the mean time, the godly poor are strangers to them; and strange they must be, unless they will drink, swear, ramble, and applaud them for their kindness and hospitality to all the rabble with whom they converse and live. Alas! this is not the life of Christians, but of heathens. I shall never forget the common saying of a grave, ancient, and godly divine in this country, who is now with God: 'a leg of a lark,' said he, 'is more worth than the whole body of a kite.' One poor soul, be it never so poor, if it have but the breathing of God's spirit in it, he is of more value than a village, or a whole town full of wicked, debauched, atheistical boon companions, as we usually call them. God's people (whether poor or no) are the glory of the world, yea, the glory of God himself: but as for others, God speaks of them as dirt and dross, *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross*, Psal. cxix. 119. God's people are usually called his *portion*.—*The Lord's portion is his people.* Deut. xxxii. 9. his *pleasant portion*.

portion. They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness, Jer. xii. 10. his *treasure, his peculiar treasure. Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people, for the earth is mine*, Exod. xix. 5. his *glory, the crown of his glory. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God*, Isa. lxii. 3. What, is it thus? are poor saints in such esteem with God, that he looks upon them as his portion, his pleasant portion, his treasure, his peculiar treasure, his glory, the crown of his glory? O then how should you bend yourselves to close with them, and to be much in their society, whose very society is indeed the communion of saints!

3. Delight in them, as those in whom God himself delights. David, though a king, could stoop thus far. I believe he was upon the point of charity, when he spake thus of them; but whom did his charity benefit? Not God, but his poor saints. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my God: my goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, in whom is all my delight*, Psal. xvi. 2, 3. It seems the poor saints were a king's delight; kings have their delights, and this was all the delight King David had, *In them is all my delight.* And no wonder, for herein he conformed to God; the poor saints are God's delight; it is God's judgment of men, that *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, Prov. xii. 26. Hence some observe, that the lion and eagle were not offered in sacrifice to God, but the poor lamb and dove were: great and brave spirits of the world, high as the eagle, and lofty as the lion, God regards them not; but poor humble spirits, that are contemptible in the eyes of the world, these are precious to God; he delights in them as in his own darlings. Why thus do you delight in them, as those in whom God himself delights.

4. Do them good, as the best and chief objects of charity. It is the apostle's advice, *As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. You see there is an *especially* put upon them. Let me tell you of a deal of mistaken charity amongst you: you think, to do offices of love, or of kindness, or of alms, promiscuously to all, is brave, and gets a good report of the country, and the praise of men; but you shall never have the praise of God for this. If you will do any office of love, kindness, alms, or the like, be sure to set an *especially* on the household of faith. These are they that represent Christ, and indeed are the members of Christ, and stand in Christ's stead; so he will tell you at the last day, *For I was an hungered, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and you visited me;*

in prison, and you came unto me. In as much as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me, Mat. xxv. 35, 36. Those who are Christ's brethren (which the wicked are not), yea, those who are the least of Christ's brethren (which the proud, high, lofty ones are not), why these are they whom Christ reckons on his own account, for whatsoever ye do to them, you do it unto him. - Oh! that this plea of Christ were writ on your doors, that ye might better know who to welcome in, and whom to entertain and go good unto, as you would bid welcome, and give entertainment to Jesus Christ himself.

Of the Assaults of Satan, to the use of unlawful means.

IF we are in adversity, satan usually tempts us to the use of unlawful means. Thus when Christ had no ordinary means of getting bread, satan tempts him to provide for himself by extraordinary. When Esau came out of the field, weary and hungry, and almost dead for want of meat, then, 'Sell thy birth-right,' said satan, and so he did. When Peter was in great danger in the high-priest's hall, then, 'deny thy master,' said satan, 'forswear him, and curse thyself.' When we are in adversity and in want, then saith satan, 'Thou must live, thou must not put forth thy family to beg, thou must utter thy wares, though by lying, swearing, exacting, deceiving.' Want and necessity is the devil's opportunity to set upon us; fowlers usually set their snares for birds in the winter time, when there is want of food; and therefore prayed Agur, *Give me neither poverty nor riches.* And why not poverty? *Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain,* Prov. xxx. 8, 9. In poverty, temptations are strong, to distrust, to steal, lie, swear, or to use ill shifts and unlawful means. Many a time have I seen a poor professor put to shift; and whilst others censured, I have thought with myself, Ah, poor soul! why should I or any other censure this poor man? little know we the temptations to which he is subject. But to such let me give some counsel.

Of Wrestling with Satan in this respect.

1. CONSIDER, that all good things are then beautiful, when they are compassed by good means. Hence the godly man consults ever what is just, not what is gainful; or what may be compassed by honest courses, not what may be gained by fraud, deceit,

deceit, cozenage, or the like carnal dealings. *Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right*, Prov. xvi. 8.

2. Consider, that there is no necessity, if ordinary and lawful means fail, to use unlawful. When men say, 'I must live and maintain my family;' know, it is not absolutely necessary thou shouldst live, but so long as God pleaseth; nay, it is absolutely necessary that thou shouldst rather perish, and not live, than break God's commandments. If thou diest for want of means, thou mayest go to heaven as Lazarus, and exchange a miserable life for a happy; but if, to keep thee from dying, thou losest thy soul, that is to leap out of the frying-pan into the fire. Thou hadst better starve, than through distress to use unlawful means, and so offend God. Who would wilfully, upon any pretence, run himself into an hot burning oven? O take heed! O for shame, never plead a need or necessity for hell!

3. Consider, whatsoever is got by ill means, is got with God's anger, and the splitting shipwreck of a good conscience; an hard bargain. This made Solomon say, 'There is gold, and a multitude of rubies,' Prov. xx. 15. which haply may be got in selling or buying, by a false oath or lie; 'but the lips of truth are a precious jewel.' The meaning is, that truth and a good conscience are far more precious than gold or rubies. Oh it is a pitiful exchange, when with the loss of our best jewel, we gain nothing but dung and dross. 'What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Mat. xvi. 26. O the folly, to save the nail of thy finger, with the loss of thine eyes! to get a little wealth, and to lose thy God, thy soul, and a good conscience, more worth than worlds! Mr. Perkins relates a story of a good man, who, being ready to starve, stole a lamb, and being about to eat of it with his poor children, and as his manner was to crave a blessing, he durst not do it, but fell into a great perplexity of conscience, acknowledged his fault to the owner, and promised restitution, if ever God enabled him. In this case, if ever thou repentest, thus will thy conscience smite thee; and if thou never repentest, thy conscience will be as a worm gnawing on thee in hell.

4. Labour to live the life of faith. If lawful means fail, as bread in famine, yet mayest thou feed thyself with faith. Is not this the Psalmist's cure? *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed*, Psal. xxxvii. 3. Mark that *verily*, it is all one with *in truth and in stableness thou shalt be fed*. A promise well improved, is instead of meat and drink to a hungry soul. *The just*, in troublesome times, *shall live by faith*, Heb. x. 38. Did not Abraham thus, when

when he told his son Isaac, as they were going up the mount, *My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering*, Gen. xxii. 8. Come, it may be thou art low, and hast scarce bread enough to put into thy mouth; remember, that if God speak the word to weak means, they shall work as well as the strong; an hard and dry crust of bread, and a very little shall be nourishment, both competent and comfortable: Never use shifts, if in any of thy wants thou hast not lawful means at hand; *He that believeth will not make haste*, saith the prophet, Isa. xxviii. 16. Christ, in his great necessity, would not turn stones into bread to save his life; and wilt thou, in far less necessity, not to save thy life, but to increase thy wealth, turn stones into bread, yea, into blood, the blood of poor saints, as poor as thyself, by thy oppression and extortion? Rather call to mind God's promise, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* By *every word*, that is, by every thing which God appoints, and gives power unto, to be our nourishment: the Lord would have us to live by faith, and to depend on him in the greatest straits; for God is all-sufficient.

THE END.

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